

MARY'S MEADOW PAPERS.







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MARY'S MEADOW.



# MARY'S MEADOW PAPERS

BY

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(VIOLET BULLOCK-WEBSTER),

AUTHOR OF "THE IDEA OF MARY'S MEADOW," ETC.

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

ARMEL O'CONNOR



Such happy hearts are wandering, crystal clear,  
In the great world where men and women dwell :  
Earth's mighty shows they neither love nor fear,  
They are content to be, while I rebel,  
Out of their own delight dispensing cheer,  
And ever softly whispering, " All is well."

*The Happy Hearts of Earth.*

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

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## FOREWORD

IT is Thoreau who says that "Life is not habitually seen from any common platform so truly and unexaggerated as in the light of literature." And because I agree with him, these papers are offered to the world, with a trust in its judgment of an absolute sincerity, of a fearlessness that enthusiasm alone can command. They are offered, but not before certain questions are answered and doubts reassured.

Are they too intimate? I know them to be true to life and definite in aim. Are they egotistical? Perhaps in one sense, for they tell the story of a woman's vision and her unswerving fidelity to its promptings. But they are not selfish. The whole book reveals self-sacrifice illumined by a sense of humour, and its moral is: how good it is to live one's own life for love's sake, and for others.

God's perfect world is *hers*! That is her secret, her

## FOREWORD

discovery ; and being unselfish, she wants her readers to know that it is theirs also. She has lighted a candle, swept the house, and sought diligently ; and now, having found, not a groat but a world—as God designed it, sees it, and loves it—she calls together her friends and neighbours that they may share it too.

ARMEL O'CONNOR.

MARY'S MEADOW,  
LUDLOW, ENGLAND,  
*15th August, 1915.*

TO ARMEL'S MOTHER







# MARY'S MEADOW PAPERS

## I

### TO ARMEL'S MOTHER

*June 15th, 1912.*

MANY happy returns of your birthday! I only wish that it had been possible for you to spend it with us. Very naturally you want to know whether actually living in Mary's Meadow is anything like what it used to be in my imagination. Does the reality come up to the ideal? you ask. Oh! how I should like you to come and see for yourself the living answer. However, I quite understand why you consider it still a duty "to keep the candle burning in the window"; and when, at length, the psychological moment arrives and you do come to see our home, it will be to find that you have always been here, dwelling in our hearts—the pervading presence of benignant motherhood.

Armel says that there is only one perfect mother—the mother of her son; and he is making a collection of verses for you, written by great men on the subject of the mother. All that is noble, gracious, unselfish,

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spiritual, is bound up for him in that one word ; and so affectionate are his memories of you, so vivid his descriptions, that I, too, am able to share in the impressions of his childhood. I can see the lovely lady in a V-shaped, black evening dress, with a rose in her hair, coming to kiss her little son "Good-night." I can see her burning in a scarlet silk robe with a very long train, and a hanging sleeve that has caught fire over a lamp, and I also admire the presence of mind with which she wraps herself round in a rug.

I listen with Armel to the stories of your girlhood, and I think I appreciate the Uncle who brought you up almost as much as you do. That fine old English gentleman has passed away, long since, to another mansion in Heaven, but there remains, imperishable, the picture of "Miss Lovely-Eyes," acting as hostess in his country house, with a constant stream of visitors coming up the mile and a half of drive. Imperishable also on the highly polished roof of his closed carriage are some marks which look like scratches, but which are, in reality, the record of a charitable act. As a rule, he was most careful of that well-appointed brougham, but on this particular occasion the burden looked so heavy, and the poor old woman seemed so tired, that his kind heart prompted him to tell the coachman to put her basket of washing on the top, whilst the laundress got inside and sat with him ; and I love him for saying, "We are both of us getting old now, aren't we, Sally?" I love him also for going to Church on Sundays in his old coat (very shabby, though beautifully cut), and for

## TO ARMEL'S MOTHER

replying when someone pointed out that he could well afford a magnificent fur-lined arrangement, such as that worn by Mr. Nouveau Riche, "Ah! but *I* can afford to wear an old one."

We turn from these recollections of your happy girlhood to the years when limited means and an increasing family strained your resources to the utmost, yet found you brave as ever, and always able to rise to the occasion. I see you writing, writing, hour after hour, a clever woman with quiet courage; and I can well believe that the little daughter sitting motionless upon a stool at your feet, with silent sympathy and unbounded faith, must have softened the judgment of many a critical editor. "Mousey," her brothers called her, though it was she who listened, and the pen that scratched. Then I can see the authoress look up, when her young husband, who is still her lover, comes in; and he, forgetting she is a woman, and only conscious of the fact that he has got home to the best of chums, bursts forth, "My dear fellow, what do you think? I have just seen the Editor of the *World*, and he says——" Again I picture you at Carrolle, when the galloping tide had caught you shrimping, still in your element, in peril of waters, the lady of the sea. A *crise de nerfs* would have made it impossible to save a French woman, the Count remarked. "This is my Queen of Women!" said the adoring husband, as together they held you up, with the water to your chin, and your poor feet so cut that they have never danced again.

Perhaps I do not know very much, but it is touches

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like these which give me an insight into your life and character before I met you ; and now of my own knowledge there is the glorious Mother, inspiring and inspired, who although she loves all her children equally, yet holds up the eldest son as a type, and waits with her candle burning in the window for the wanderer's return.

An Austrian to whom you introduced me, at Bexhill, remarked that in his country such admiration for a mother-in-law was unheard of, and he thought even in England it must be rare ! But then, is not such a mother-in-law the rarest thing of all ? He did not realize *that* ; I think of it often, and of all the happiness which I owe to you.

Even if it is true that all great men have had great mothers, it is not every mother who is able to describe her son to his future wife as "a hero and a saint." You were so anxious for him to be properly appreciated and understood, and I can well imagine the pang which our engagement must have cost you. Did you not just for a moment fear lest Armel's choice might prove to be a terrible mistake ? I believe so ; and yet with seraphic faith and love you rose immediately above those petty jealousies and conventionalities which would have miserably engulfed a smaller soul. You neither blamed me, nor did you blame yourself ; it was simply God's Will, you said, and He had used you as His instrument. Yet I shall always gratefully remember that, humanly speaking, but for you, Armel would never have come to Mary's Meadow.

## TO ARMEL'S MOTHER

At one time it had seemed possible, even desirable, for Betty and me to live there all alone; but I now see that without a "Daddy," she might never have really learned to love her Heavenly Father; and I also see that it is Armel's devotion to you which enables him to teach her just how Our dear Lord would have His Mother honoured.

An old gypsy woman once summed up an undesirable acquaintance as "a man who did not know how to live in a caravan." It is according to one's point of view that one divides the world; nowadays people are frequently heard to speak of "women who want the vote, and women who do not want it"; but for Betty there will be only the women who believe it necessary to take our Blessed Lady for their model, and the women who do not.

My own idea of womanhood is that every girl should be trained to have the heart of a mother. You know how very strongly I feel the *oneness of everything*; for me there is only One Woman worth copying, and *that Woman* every girl ought to aspire to be. I hope that you will understand me if I say that I believe "to hear the word of God, and keep it" is the way to be His Mother; for God is Love, and the Word was Love Incarnate, and the sweetest way to think of Mary is as every artist, in every country, in every age, has done,—as "the Mother of Fair Love."

"Man was made in the Image of God, and woman was made to be His Mother," was Aunt Rose's last message to Betty before she died. It is not necessary

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to ask exactly how. It does not yet appear what we shall be; but there are moments of illumination when one almost understands about the Mirror of Perfection, and how every polished atom, *facing the right way*, goes to form that Mirror.

I love to think of my little Betty as a tiny atom of the great Mother-Heart, helping to fulfil Our Lord's last prayer, on the evening before He died, that His Church might be all one—and to me it seems all one to be His Mother and His Sister and *His Bride*. Already the duties of Universal Motherhood are clearly understood by Betty. When you come you will notice at once that this is the strongest feature of Mary's Meadow teaching; whether in the future she is to marry or not, for the present she has to cultivate the maternal instinct. Even at this early age her tenderness to the little ones, who bring posies to the door, is very touching. It is really beautiful to see her take them by the hand, and lead them to the Bower, where, kneeling on either side of her, she teaches them to say: "My Queen, My Mother, remember I am thine own, Keep me, guard me, as a thing of thine, thy own possession": those poor little, dirty, ragged children, who are, from force of circumstances, exposed to every kind of temptation. They simply love coming down here, and even if I sometimes get tired of the frequency of their visits, Betty never does.

In addition to giving them everything that they really need, she generally adds a sprig of rosemary from the bushes which grow on either side Our Lady's Bower, and

## TO ARMEL'S MOTHER

she tells the story of how Mother Mary hung out her Baby's first tiny garments to dry on the rosemary bushes at Bethlehem, and how they left this sweet scent for a remembrance. Our bushes will never get a chance of growing to any great size, but Betty's constant remembrance keeps them excellently well pruned, and a thick green bush in winter is a beautiful sight, isn't it?

It also has another meaning, "where Rosemary flourishes, the housewife rules," which I think you will appreciate. "It is for man," wrote Plato, "to administer the Republic, for woman the home," and in Mary's Meadow woman is contented to rule over her own domain.

The kingdom of the heart is a large kingdom, and needs wise government. We try never to dislike anyone, or to think anyone wicked or ugly; but we do feel sometimes that some people are *in need of prayers*, and every time we pass we say a "Hail, Mary," and watch for an improvement. In the case of one old man's expression, we have been watching for improvement for the last four years, but are not yet in the least discouraged. When we see him coming Betty creeps closer to me, saying, "Here is the man we pray for," and we say our "Aves" till he is out of sight. I think that is the best way for a girl to face sin, and to have a knowledge of the world. Instead of saying, "That is a wicked old man. Never speak to him, or let him touch you," I say, "Perhaps he has never heard about Our Lord's Mother, and he does not know how good little girls must try to be; and perhaps he has never

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said a prayer for himself in all his life ; and he cannot live much longer, and when he comes to Heaven's Gate, St. Peter may say, 'No one in the least like this can enter here!'" So we, who know that Mary is "the Gate of Heaven" (and that the safest plan for those who have set their hearts on entering there, is to keep their eyes fixed on the gate), will offer up our Aves for him, that graces may fall before it is too late.

Thus the maternal instinct extends even towards the aged prodigal.

But most people are quite easy to love. We love to see the rosy-cheeked mothers at their doors, surrounded by fat rosy children. They remind us of a lovely apple tree! And Betty wonders why the cottage gardens have so many, and why the rich people's apple trees are often left without any fruit at all? Sometimes I think that the babies' Angels make mistakes and take them to the wrong houses, and the rich ladies, who should have had them, do not know that they are really meant to go and claim them.

"You will find your baby at No. 99, up the Blue Lion Yard, off the Uncared-for Street," whispers an Angel ; but the rich lady who is longing for children does not hear, her motor-car makes such a noise as she rushes up and down the country seeking happiness, and never guessing that her happiness lies waiting for her in a broken cradle close at hand.

The Angels delight in hiding our babies in this way. And ever since Betty can remember, she has loved to hear the story about her Angel taking her to the wrong



## TO ARMEL'S MOTHER

house by mistake, and how I hunted till I found her. People used to wonder how I would tell her, and often warned me of the unkindness of letting the surprise and shock come in after life, as it did to my own adopted sister, who grew up in complete ignorance of the other mother and the other eight! So for Betty's sake the story of "The Angel's Mistake" was arranged to form a definite part of her education. There are to be no shocks in after life where my adopted daughter is concerned.

And talking of real mothers, I think perhaps God arranged for me not to be Betty's mother according to the flesh, so that my affection for her from the very beginning might be placed upon an absolutely spiritual level.

This is the idea for a poem I jotted down when I first had her, to be called

### THE HIGHER MOTHERHOOD.

I am the Mother of your Heart,  
So love me.

I am the Mother of your Mind,  
So understand me.

I am the Mother of your Soul,  
So pray for me.

And then it seemed to me that it was a poem just as it stood—so I did not enlarge upon it.



# THE HEAVENLY RUNECRAFT





## II

### THE HEAVENLY RUNECRAFT

A FRIEND of ours told me, the other day, that she was shocked to find how little Betty knew!

"She can neither read nor write, she can't count beyond twenty, she can't say any of her tables, she can't even tell the time, and she doesn't know what half-a-sovereign is!"

The friend was nearly ten years old, and Betty was just seven. The friend went twice a day to school, with a satchel on her back, to receive instruction from certificated mistresses, and I believe she spent the greater part of the evening in preparing lessons at home. I expect she knew exactly everything that Betty did not know, and I could not help feeling sorry that the little scholar should be so concerned over my baby's ignorance, especially as I had been giving her regular lessons ever since she was five weeks old.

"*What* lessons?" asked Worldie, incredulously, and when I went on further to explain, she laughed so heartily that I thought it might be worth while to jot down exactly what Betty's lessons have been up to now. I know that you won't laugh.

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For seven years my system has been to make deep dents on the soft brain ; and the first dent was *Music*. All her baby days, after her bath, as soon as she was dressed for the night, she lay on my lap by the fire, enjoying her bottle, whilst I taught her to *love* singing praises to God ; because I believe that so much depends on early association, and one always loves what one associates with Mother-love.

For myself the idea of saying the Divine Office is a glorious one, but when in reality I tried to do it as a Postulant in a Religious Order, I got so bored, and so hopelessly weary of the indoor monotony, that a wise Superior allowed me to spend Matins and Lauds in the garden. Oh ! how ashamed I am now when I think of that ! and yet at the time I felt helpless in the bonds of early association. When my own best self comes true she shall *delight* in singing praises to her Creator ; she shall not get tired and bored, and want to run out and look at the flowers, as I did. Flowers always had the power to bring my heart back at once to God ; the music of words, unfortunately, I had never learned ; so St. Bernard's hymn was what I used to sing to Betty, as she lay rocking in my arms night after night.

Of course I knew that, according to the book, the child should be put straight down into its cot ; that it ought not to be rocked just after its bottle ; and all those *Chavasse* kinds of wisdom. Mine was "the wisdom of those men of power, who instructed the people in most holy words, and sought out, by their skill, musical tones."

## THE HEAVENLY RUNECRAFT

You know "The Virtues of the Name Jesus." The very name is music, and I have so fastened it in Betty's heart that it will never come out of her thought—that when she speaks to Him and says, "Jesu," through custom, it may be in her ear joy, and in her mouth honey, and in her heart melody.

Later on we sang, "Heart of the Holy Child," and St. Francis Xavier's hymn, and as soon as Betty could speak she sang the chorus, "E'en so I love Thee, and will love, and in Thy praise will sing, solely because Thou art my God, and my Eternal King." Then came the hymns to Mary, "Hail, Queen of Heaven," "O Purest of Creatures," and "Look down, O Mother Mary, from thy bright throne above."

I once knew a rich old widow lady, a recent convert, who said that her greatest ambition had been to become a Child of Mary; and I have never forgotten how she was not in the least ashamed of saying so—in fact she boasted of it—although the people who heard her generally laughed. To the average, material mind it did seem rather funny. But oh! what a lovely world it would be if every rich old lady had the same gentle, humble ambition!

I always taught Betty to look up from the earthly Mother who warmed her bottle, to a picture of the Blessed Virgin, which hung over the nursery mantel-piece. That blue-robed figure, with the calm face and folded hands, had been a sudden inspiration of my own—if indeed that woman in a London flat *was* I! that woman who suddenly felt sick of the world, and the

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ambitions of the world, and the ways of fashion, and the false standards by which all things were judged ; and who said " Not at home " one evening, and sat down for a couple of hours trying to work out an expression of true womanliness from a little print of a picture by Baldovinetti in the Louvre. I intended it to be a present for the mother of " Boy Blue," but it was evidently one of those things which *meant* to form a part of Betty's home. My dear friend's death, before it reached completion, left it on my hands ; and so it came about that upon my adopted daughter's happy evening devotions my Mother Mary looked down.

When Armel's piano rendered instrumental music a delightful possibility, Betty was allowed to accompany herself with one finger, if she first looked up to the " Ecce Homo ! " (which you gave us as a wedding present) and said, " O, Sacred Heart of Jesus, I implore that I may love Thee daily, more and more." This was Armel's idea. He hung the beautiful bas-relief above the piano, and he taught Betty to offer up all her music to Our Lord.

Don't tiny children *love* to play the piano ? and how easy it is to direct that affection and that happiness to the Glory of God ! Betty always calls it her " Service," and still says, " Please may I have a little Service ? " when she means that she wants to pick out tunes.

Arithmetic, in which our little friend found her so backward, was our very next lesson ; but it never occurred to me to go beyond the number five. " Kiss His Hands, Kiss His Feet, Kiss His Heart," as we held



## THE HEAVENLY RUNECRAFT

the crucifix, had seemed to me the perfection of all that counts—humanly speaking. Whilst, as for multiplication, if Betty has not learned her tables, it is because they are *not* hers. Hers is in the porch, a flap-table, which she knows how to put up for any poor people who are in need of a meal, and they would assure you that she has learned it very well indeed: so that with regard to arithmetic, on the Last Day of her term, when the Great Examination takes place, I believe that the Examiner will be entirely satisfied.

Everyone cannot be clever, but I believe that every child ought to be trained to be both wise and good. Do you remember St. Veronica of Milan, the child of peasant parents, who after days of toiling in the house and fields, would rise at night to try to teach herself to read? As the desire for perfection grew upon her, she became anxious about her lack of learning, but Our Blessed Lady was sent to comfort her with the assurance that this was not necessary; and she revealed to her three mystical signs, which would teach her more than any books. The first signified purity of intention; the second, abhorrence of murmuring or criticism; the third, daily meditation on the Passion of Christ. So, remembering this, our writing lessons were equal to the arithmetic in simplicity—a straight stroke, placed perpendicularly, **|** signified look up: our daily duties must be done for no human motive, but for God alone. A straight stroke, horizontally placed, **—** was the sign for going straight on with whatever we were doing, never judging our neighbours, but praying for anyone who

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seemed to be making a mistake; whilst the two strokes, placed over each other, † meant think of Jesus dying on the cross, remember how He *loves* you, and when you have a little pain try to bear it bravely for the love of Him.

It seemed to me that if Betty spent her first seven years in assimilating these ideas, she would have laid a very solid foundation on which to build her spiritual life—before she came to the use of reason. So, year after year, whilst her school-girl friends filled their minds with concern over the fact that she could not write, Betty filled exercise-book after exercise-book with these three mystic signs; and I felt like a Saxon mother in the olden days, teaching my child rune-craft. (A rune, as I expect you know, is one of a particular set of alphabetical characters peculiar to the ancient northern nations of Europe, all the runes being formed almost entirely of straight lines, either single or in composition.)

With regard to reading, Betty read nicely at three years old; very well indeed to my mind, although to Worldie and her companions it seemed that just because she was not acquainted with many words her reading lessons must have been neglected. Not so, by any means. Our book was the Hon. Mrs. Kavanagh's arrangement of the Mass for children, and we studied it regularly every morning after breakfast. GOD, JESUS, MARY, were the words we learned. We pointed to them, we took it in turns to spell them, we pounced to see which of us was able to find them first, and

## THE HEAVENLY RUNECRAFT

we practised bowing our heads at Our dear Lord's Name.

Then, at the age of four, Armel taught her LOVE, and she was so proud to find it for me, and say, "I've got a Daddy now, Daddy loves me, and he has taught me *that*."

The fewer things you know, the more you are likely to ponder on them ; and if you know only beautiful and holy words, then you can only read beautiful and holy books. "And in the crisis of life, when she has to choose for herself, unadvised, and without time to deliberate, she will instinctively follow the line of conduct which has become familiar to her in thought and sympathy." That was what I meant when I said that I hoped some day Betty would be a second Joan of Arc, should the world need her. Her standard will have always been the standard of the Saints ; the ideal of heroic charity has been set up before her ; and the law of her life is simply the law of Love. She knows that she possesses free-will, and she uses her liberty to wish to be the hand-maid of the Lord.

It is a great thing to know *what to wish*, and one has to educate a child's desires. It was with this object in view that Betty learned her alphabet from an A.B.C. of Saints, which I designed especially for her, with a short account of each, and a request. I gave it to her on her eighteen-months-old birthday. (When she was a baby I loved her so much, and I thought her progress so wonderful that I used to keep her birthday twice a year.) It is called, "Friends for Betty," and when it was done

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I was really very pleased about it. I felt that the whole idea had been an inspiration. How little does one know about parallel development, and the laws which govern the thought world! The reply I got from an editor to whom I submitted the MS. was that, strangely enough, that very week another Alphabet of Saints had been sent to him for review; and as the other alphabet was by Monsignor Benson, and Reginald Balfour, and S. C. Ritchie, in verse, with beautiful illustrations, needless to say mine never went further than Betty's nursery cupboard! becoming more than ever her own especial property.

Twenty-six such friends are indeed a possession worth having, not only as happy illustrations of the A.B.C. of Spiritual Science, but also as comforters who gather round in times of toothache and "wibble-wobbles." I wonder if you ever suffered from "wibble-wobbles" when you were a child? The bed keeps going up, up, up, very high; then down, down, down, very low; and whilst the bed is going up and down you can see all kinds of creatures in the air, and horrid faces on the curtain, and the doctor calls it "high temperature." Betty, who is so seldom ill, can't bear it, and I have to sing to all the Saints to come and make her better, and set her mind right again. This is how it goes: "Please, dear Saint Anthony, make little Betty better. Please, dear Saint Benedict, make little Betty better." It rather amuses Armel! The tune was composed in one of those intense moments of child-pain and mother-love, when one would "*drink up the sea*" if it would do any

## THE HEAVENLY RUNECRAFT

good. It is a monotonous sing-song, but an infallible remedy. By the time we reach St. Zita the bed remains in its proper place, the "wibble-wobbles" have departed, and the faces are the faces of our dear familiar "Friends."

Drawing followed naturally, as the next lesson. Betty drew Saints, with their descriptive emblems, on her slate for me to guess. Sometimes it took a good deal of guessing! But I always felt that it was lovely for a tiny child to attempt a picture of St. George, fighting the dragon, or St. Kentigern, restoring to life his master's bird.

History, geography, and foreign languages are all included in the stories of the Saints. Betty likes, of course, to search out on a map for the countries where her great "Friends" lived, and she likes to know in what language they made their jokes, and their lovely spiritual maxims. The history of Kings and Empires fits easily round that greater history of the servants of the King of Kings. "Halos and Crowns" is the name of our history lesson; and our geography, which at first divided itself simply between the Holy Land and the Ocean of God's Love, gradually travelled, with the spread of Christianity, over the whole face of the earth.

One word of Greek seemed to be sufficient for a child of one, and *Logos* was of course the Word we chose. A picture of St. John the Evangelist, looking up at his far-seeing, emblematic eagle, hangs, for my inspiration, above the writing-table, and pointing to that picture it is easy to explain how Our Lord's favourite disciple

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hesitated to commit to paper his impressions of the Divine revelation ; only if all his friends would pray for him that he might be inspired to write exactly in accordance with the Will of God, would he consent to begin his gospel, at their unceasing request. And then the Logos came to him—and who that writes at all has not at some moment felt the joy of that sudden coming of the inevitable word!—and the Word was God, and God is Love, and the *Thought* of God was *Love*. This exact definition of the Greek word may seem deep teaching for a baby, but with St. John's kind help it presented no difficulties to Betty's mind.

As she had never damaged the delicate tissues of her brain with Blue Beard, and Jack the Giant Killer, and the Forty Thieves, she was able to appreciate the humour of St. John's short and unvaried sermon, of which the disappointed listeners got so tired. Have you ever thought what a charming nursery story it is, told thus : When St. John was an old man at Ephesus he preached to the people, and they flocked to hear him—he who had leaned on his Master's breast at the Last Supper, he who had stood at the foot of the Cross, he to whose filial care Jesus had confided his own dear Mother. What stories he must have learned from her of her Divine Son's hidden life ! what interesting sermons he would be able to preach ! but he only just said, " Little children, love one another." Perhaps he was tired, perhaps next day he would tell them more ; the people came again : but next day it was again the same thing, and the next, and the next, and always

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just, "Little children, love one another." One describes him: An old man, leaning on a stick, his tame dove on his shoulder, helped in by faithful friends, his venerable, spiritual face shining with Heavenly emotion. "What are you going to say to-day?" the people asked, as a hint that they would like something fresh. "What are you going to preach about this morning?" And he would say, "Something lovely," smiling benignly upon them all; "Something perfectly beautiful," and the people would prepare themselves to listen, with eager anticipation. . . . Then he would say again, "Little children, love one another." and they would go away puzzled and disappointed. Betty used to feel with them, all eagerness for the sermon, and when the same old sentence came she would smile with intense delight. At last they asked, "*Why* do you always say the same thing?" and St. John answered, "Because there is nothing more to be said. If you learn, like little children, to love one another, *you will be in the Kingdom of God!*" He had leaned upon the Sacred Heart, and he had listened to the rhythm of Its beating, and he had understood that there is nothing else, in all the world, but *Love*.

Latin, for Betty, consisted in the morning salutation of a Religious House. Whichever of us woke first sang out, "Benedicamus Domino," and the other answered, "Deo Gratias." An old friend laughed at me when I solemnly assured her that my baby, directly she could speak, was going to thank God for *everything*—especially the things she did not like. But with

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St. Teresa's help it was not so very hard a lesson to instil. We used to practise during our perambulator walks, on windy days, up and down the long, broad path. Each time we turned and met the wind, and the clouds of dust blew in our eyes, Betty and I said, "Deo Gratias," backwards and forwards, to each other, as a sort of game, until we turned again and the wind was at our backs. So she grew easily familiar with the idea that "Deo Gratias" was the equivalent expression for something physically unpleasant; and in after years, whenever I heard a little voice whispering the Latin words beside me, I knew that she had got some tiny pain. Thus was St. Teresa's "Short cut to Sanctity" accomplished; and in our nursery this is what you might often have overheard:—

Betty: "Deo Gratias!"

Mummy, pausing in the middle of her writing or cooking: "What is it, darling?"

Betty: "My loose tooth aches a little bit."

Mummy, holding out her arms and rushing towards her: "*O! you sweet little Saint.*"

\* \* \* \* \*

This is what Betty knew,—in spite of all that Worldie said she did not know,—when at seven years old she came to the use of reason, and I handed her over to do real lessons with "Daddy."

But, lest you might erroneously suppose that my adopted baby was too good to live, I think I shall have to tell you of her other self—called "Susan!"



THE DISAPPEARANCE OF  
SUSAN



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### III

#### THE DISAPPEARANCE OF SUSAN

FORTY years ago she stood screaming on the outside of the picture-book, with her affectionate relations and friends all gathering round her, offering sympathy, and trying to find out what on earth was the matter. In the second picture, as well as I can remember, she was still screaming, but there were fewer friends, and their sympathy was less apparent. And so it went on to the conclusion of the story: one by one the father, brother, sister, nurse, and even the devoted Mother were obliged to go away, till at length Susan was left all alone, with her mouth wide open, screaming in a deserted world.

That was in the early days of my own childhood. I never met her again until one afternoon when Betty wanted to poke the fire, and was not allowed to do so; the determined attitude, the open mouth, the sudden roar, instantly revived that object-lesson from the land of memory, and unhesitatingly I cried out, "*Susan!*"

Now the worst of Susan is that when she has once found her way into a peaceful, happy nursery she is sure to come again, and people walking past the house can

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hear her, and they turn and say to one another, "Whatever is the matter with little Betty?" not knowing that Betty, mysteriously, has vanished, for the nonce, and another horrible young person is standing by the wash-hand-stand in her stead. Next to the fire, her favourite place is by the washhand-stand, and her favourite times for coming are when Mother is extra busy, or extra tired.

It is a remarkable fact that although Betty has been accustomed to a daily bath, and an unusual amount of hair-brushing all her infant life, Susan can't bear being put clean and tidy, and lays great stress on her resentment, covering her face with her hands, declaring that the water gets in her eyes, or clutching tight hold of her tangly hair, so that the comb is unable to go through it.

Any mother who has ever tried, in a limited time, to get Susan ready for a party, or to go down to see a visitor, can recall the thankless and exhausting process. "Oh! that there were no visitors and no parties," she feels inclined to say.

In every family, I expect at one time or another, there is a Susan, although they do not always mention her by name. The exception to this rule, although at first sight it might appear to be an unmixed blessing, is regarded by maternal human instinct as a foredoomed calamity in disguise. "Too good to live" they name it, such a degree of unselfishness, obedience, and gentleness filling relations with alarm. In all my life I have only come across one exception, whose mother, although she firmly believed that it is advisable for children some-

## THE DISAPPEARANCE OF SUSAN

times to feel themselves in the wrong, was never able to find an opportunity for scolding her. She occupied herself in pretty and unusual ways, delicately dusting the crannies in a wall beside the pathway with her pocket-handkerchief, for the soiling of which it was half hoped to call her to account, until the explanation that she was "making nests for the Angels" disarmed all criticism. She would stand for hours watching the old birds feed their young, and her grief at the sight of a dead fledgling which had fallen from a height was pitiable. Out walking, every member of the family vied with the other when passing a "mole tree" to divert the little girl's attention, lest those soft, dark, velvet bodies, hung ruthlessly upon the gamekeeper's branches, should break her tender heart.

The nearest approach to a naughty thing which that little exception ever did was to pin a trail of paper to her Grannie's cap string, and even then she spoiled the effect of it by being *so* sorry, five minutes afterwards, and begging to be forgiven; never dreaming that her mother had sighed with relief, and the Grannie was delighted, absolutely delighted, at the innocent mischief.

In the case of Susan one can hardly imagine a greater contrast to the exception than the rule. Poor little Susan! the unwanted child. Her very existence might be worked up into a pathetic story; it is so sad to think that no nursery wants her, no nurse can put up with her, nobody loves her. O Susan! She does not always scream, she may be selfish, disobedient, lazy or troublesome in any way, as time goes on she dresses

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herself up in many fashions ; but there is always a twist about the corner of her mouth, suggestive of a possible wide opening, by which recognition is invited. The frequency of her visits, and the regularity of their return, prepare all those who have to do with her for exactly what may be expected : if Betty wants to go out, and it is not time to go out ; or if it is the time to go to bed, and Betty does not want to go to bed, then in walks Susan, for all the world like a cuckoo from a clock, or the old man or woman in the weather-house !

For a long time I tried not to see her, and made a special study of the art of ignoring her existence. When other people exclaimed at her, and pointed her out to me, and prophesied the terrible end which she must come to, I half closed my eyes, concentrated my mind, and looked right through those atoms dancing all the wrong way, until I saw my Elizabeth, sweet little Elizabeth, with the calm, high brow, kind smile, and clear, true eyes. "She *is* there," I said, "I see her ;" and the good-natured district nurse of wide experience, the doctor's childless wife, the widow lady of sensitive refinement, the practical, commonsense, unmarried, elderly school-mistress, all looked, and seeing only Susan's strong will, violent temper, and terrific lung power, agreed with one another that I was blind, or if not literally deaf and blind, of far too sanguine a temperament, and destined in a few years' time to awful disillusionment.

"Poor lady ! she thinks the child is perfect," they would say, not guessing that their pronouncement was far from being a correct statement of the case.

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Of course I saw the pebbles which my adopted daughter *would* pick up, from the neat path at some friend's house where we were calling, and throw upon the well-kept lawn; I saw her kicking stones, and spoiling the toes of her best shoes; I saw her scraping the mud on the road into patterns with her new golosh; I saw her jumping into the swept-up heaps of snow beside our gate, and recklessly discarding hat and gloves and tie into the nearest ditch; but then I had also seen her at the age of one (when any other baby would have been contented to lie on its back and say "Coo," and wait for admiration) throwing away her feeding bottles over the edge of the perambulator, with an utter disregard for spilled milk and broken glass. She was so full of vigour and determination, kicking her socks off every other minute, and standing right up in the carriage the next; and even, if my watchful eye were temporarily distracted, leaning perilously over the edge to watch the wheel go round. During those perambulator days I looked forward to the time when she would walk; when she walked she took to bolting from me down dark, narrow alleys, if I stopped to speak to anyone, and my time was spent in hunting for her, chasing her, getting other children to help me circumvent her, and then vainly trying to comfort her as I led her—torn, crushed, crumpled, bruised, cut, and unconquered—home.

The wilfulness, obstinacy, and disobedience that became apparent to other people when she was able to trot about alone, were by no means new characteristics to the mother who had nursed her, prayed for her, and

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done penance for her, ever since she was five weeks old. I saw the faults, in all probability far more clearly than anyone else did, but through them all I saw the *real* Elizabeth—the Saint that was to be, and I never forgot that it was my duty to help my baby clear away the rubbish in between. There were times, I must confess, when the little rubbish heap looked rather like a mountain; but, although I had some difficulty in getting rid of it, I never lost sight of the fact that it would go—when the temptations, which she was not yet sufficiently determined to conquer for herself, had been done battle with by me. So there were meals of hard, dry crusts, which she had left; and there were nights of hard, cold sleeping on the floor, and there were sometimes floods of weeping in disappointment and despair, when I had to remind myself of the words with which St. Ambrose consoled St. Monica: “It is impossible that the child of so many tears should perish.”

Thus for the first long seven years I went on steadily making dents upon the baby brain, knowing that the deliberate acts would come, later on, with the use of reason, and trying not to feel too distressed over the little thoughtless actions of the present. Sometimes when Susan was very troublesome I used to say, “Let’s see if we can find Betty,” and after a long, tactful search behind the curtain, under the table, on the mantelpiece and in the tea-caddy, she used to come back laughing, *so* good, and ready to listen with delight to all the naughty things that Susan had been doing whilst she was away; though of course it was sad to



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find her pinafore black with coal dust, her shoes soaked through with mud, her picture book scribbled over, and her best toys broken.

With the advent of a "Daddy" to our nursery there came six other little personalities; or it may have been that Betty's character when passed through the prism of his intellect was more scientifically broken up into its component parts. Catherine was his especial favourite, his companion in expeditions to the town, and his enraptured audience, sitting on his knee, whilst he told stories of the other children. And I, going about my house-work in another room, caught glimpses of them too. There was Emmeline, who lost her tea-set in "The Blue Lagoon," and wandered about vaguely seeking for it, till some kind sailor silently placed it in her way. (Betty being in the habit of losing nearly everything, fully appreciated the humour of that incident.) There were the three song children, Dulcie and Daisy, and Dorothy May, whom Armel sang about; beautiful, well-behaved children, who only came here very rarely, on birthdays, and special occasions, such as "white frock parties": they always said "Please" and "Thank you," and remembered which was the "How d'y'do hand." Betty felt very much impressed when Daddy told her about those little girls, they sounded so impossibly good, and then when he had worked her up to the point of appreciating them and believing in them he would enlarge on Susan's enormities by way of contrast: how she turned round as if on a pivot, in Church, at every opening of the door, and simply wouldn't remember

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to take warning by Mrs. Lot! How grieved her mother was when she refused to help her, and flung her clothes about and smashed her playthings, and got so wild and excited that she could not sleep, and kept calling out all night, "Mother, dear, will you just come here a millet?" "Millet" sounded rather amusing as Daddy said it, but his little Catherine felt ashamed and nestled in his arms, and tried to think of that Susan child as living in some country far away, right over the sea—the sort of child one hears about, but never expects to meet.

"If she was in a picture book, I should cut her out and burn her, it is much too ugly a story to have in Mary's Meadow," she declared—Daddy's Catherine being a most right-thinking little daughter, who deserved all sorts of treats. Sometimes as a reward for exemplary conduct he would take her to visit an old woman at a sweet-stuff shop, who gave her sweets like strawberries, so exactly like that you couldn't tell the difference! in crinkled paper dishes, the sort of dainty that only a Daddy's own little girl would ever dare to think of having, and a very kind Daddy at that!

"Come here," he would say, in the early days before she really understood him. "What for?" Betty would ask; but Catherine soon realized that it was certain to be something perfectly delightful, and learned to run to him in a minute.

After our marriage necessitated the dividing of my attention, another constant claim was Perpetua, so called because she never would stop bothering. When some

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poem was being read aloud, or when some important letter needed an immediate answer, or when some large bill, starting with an "account rendered," which I well knew was paid, necessitated a thorough scrutiny of all the other items,—these were the occasions when Perpetua insisted upon the recognition of her existence. It was not so much what she wanted, as the persistency with which she wanted it; and to meet these exhausting emergencies we at length invented a game, called "the obedience game," which we learned and adapted from the Life of St. Rose of Lima. "If I *have* to be interrupted," I thought, when I first hit on this plan of turning Perpetua's tiresomeness to good use—"If I *have* to be bothered incessantly, it may as well be with the definite intention of instilling the merit of obedience into that infant mind." And from a game it developed into a story, which was told and re-told, until, at length, at her request it came to be written down, and ran as follows:—

One day when Mother was busy in the kitchen, up came little Betty and asked if she might tidy her cell, and Mother said, "Yes, dear, I am going to make a cake, and as I don't want to be disturbed, that will be a very good thing for you to do." A few minutes later when Mother was measuring out the self-raising flour, up came little Betty again, and stood still with her heels together and her hands to her sides as she had been taught to do for "attention." "What is it, darling?" asked Mother, not caring for the interruption, but glad to see her child behaving so well. "Please, Mother dear,

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will you give me permission to pick up the bits on the floor?" "Yes, dear, certainly. That is a nice tidy thing to do." So Betty went off to pick up the bits. But in a few minutes, just as the cake was going into the oven, back she came again, asking most politely, "Please, dear Mother, will you kindly allow me to put all these bits of paper and cotton in the rubbish bucket under the sink?" But Mother was so intent on the oven being exactly the right heat for the cake that she did not hear footsteps behind her, and the voice made her start, and she burned her finger and felt vexed, and answered impatiently, "O you little fidget! what is it now?" And Betty repeated her request. "Yes, dear, of course, that is the place in which you always put them;" she said, and Betty went away again, for a little while, only a little while. All the morning her polite requests went on; might she fold up her nightgown, and hang up her dressing-gown, and put her shoes in a straight line under the dressing-table, and dust the kitchen chairs, and play with her doll, and draw on her slate?

Brother Lawrence might have borne it patiently, and never have lost his peace of mind, and culinary skill; but Mother got very irritable, and made mistakes; she hated being bothered just when she was in the act of straining the soup, and trying to be very careful not to let any of it get wasted, and becoming irritable she used an enamel saucepan instead of an iron one, and the soup was too thick, and got caught on one side (because the fire was very hot for the sake of the cake in the

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oven), and Mother wondered if it was quite spoiled, and would taste burnt; and at that very minute Betty began again, and she lost her temper altogether. "How you *do* bother! what makes you so tiresome to-day? What on earth is the matter with you?" Then Betty lifted up an angel face, with trustful, innocent eyes, and said, "Please Mother, dear, I want to be a Saint, and you said the way to be a Saint was always to ask permission about everything, and to be perfectly obedient."

So the end is that Mother hugged her, and the soup didn't taste a bit burnt, and the cake turned out well, and Brother Lawrence and St. Rose of Lima congratulated themselves on having had a considerable share of the morning's proceedings!

Like every other young thing, the habit of obedience grows, and at a certain height there comes the blossom of consideration for the giver of permissions.

A woman, however weary, whilst still on two feet, washing and ironing, cooking and clearing away, does not present herself as a subject of compassion to her offspring; and even to her own eye, her sufferings merely seem to translate themselves into outbursts of irritability.

But the usually active mother, lying flat upon a bed in broad daylight, awakens dormant pity in a little daughter's heart; and the sudden reversal of the order of daily ministrings, fetchings and carryings, hot-water bottles and cups of milk, doors to be opened and windows to be shut, quickly endows the young intelligence with an enlarged environment for its hitherto impulsive,

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but misdirected energy. No voluntary penance on my part had ever conquered Betty's temptations with such success as did that unintentional illness when it became her pleasure to wait upon my pain. In tidying the sick room, and clearing away invalid trays of food, she seemed, without difficulty now, to be clearing away her own rubbish heap. Susan absolutely disappeared, and all that was best in the other six personalities gathered themselves together into a very satisfactory child. Catherine looked after her Daddy, counting his stout bottles and reminding him when they would have to be ordered again. The three song children were unusually careful with their white pinafores and company manners. Emmeline remembered to put her books on the bookshelf, and her toys in the toy cupboard, and, if by accident she did mislay anything for a while, she made her request for assistance to St. Anthony of Padua. Perpetua, when the fit took her to be very officious and insistent, only wanted to do things to help Mother, instead of wanting to have something for herself.

So that what with Catherine, Dulcie, Daisy and Dorothy May, Emmeline and Perpetua, as well as Betty all against her, that Susan child was utterly routed ; and when her Mother rose from her sick bed and undertook once more the duties of the home, she found, to her unutterable relief, kind, gentle, sweet, and ready to be her right hand in everything, that very little daughter in whom she had so long believed, and for whose advent she had prayed so earnestly. Elizabeth had come to stay.

# THE LONG PROCESSION







#### IV

#### THE LONG PROCESSION

“**T**O suffer, not to die” had been the prayer which I made such a tremendous effort to pray sincerely when I first loved Armel. During the two months which elapsed between our meeting and his asking me to marry him my constant endeavour was to put all wish for personal happiness quite out of my mind and to desire no change in my state of life, unless such an alteration of circumstances would make it easier for Betty to become a Saint ; but when once I was convinced by my Director that the advent of another parent would be for her advantage, that a father’s influence and example would render our family life more perfect ; when once we *were* married and had settled down together in our little home, I desired neither to suffer nor to die ; in fact, I must admit quite frankly, I was human enough just to want to “live happily ever afterwards.”

Pain was the price, however, which we were first required to pay ; after his football accident Armel suffered terribly over that operation on his knee ; and when at length he did come safely back from the

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hospital, then I got very ill. Why I should have waded into the river to pull a dead sheep from the rocks where it had stuck fast, out into the full current of the stream, no one can tell—I, least of all, though at the moment it struck me as the inevitable thing to do. A decaying carcase was not a pleasant or a healthy thing to have lying near one's garden gate, and for several days I had been trying to persuade working men and boys to make some sort of effort to move it on. Neither the force of my arguments nor the good deed in itself appealed to anybody, so I did it myself. That was all, as it seemed at the moment. Time to regret such an act of rash impetuosity was provided for me by the weeks and months of suffering that followed. This was not exactly the beginning which we should have chosen for our married life, and it almost seemed as if His Majesty had not been pleased with our idea of an ideal marriage; for the first year He sent us pain, and for the second poverty; not till the third year could we do more than "turn in our anguish whilst the thorn was fastened"; and then came peace—such a peace, that we understand, now, how for this it was worth while to wait and to suffer.

There is an old superstition about new houses. It is believed that a death occurs within a short time after a newly-built house is occupied, and I was told that the notion can be traced back to very primitive days, when the ritual of the foundation of a town, village, or house consisted in killing, or burying alive, or building into a wall a human victim as "a foundation god." Sometimes

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the old builders immured a living victim, chaste and unspotted of the world, in the foundations of their towers, that the soul, flying upwards, might animate and defend the soaring walls. Later on animals took the place of human victims ; still later, the shadow of a person passing by was allowed to fall on the building in erection. If there was no offering it was supposed that the first occupier soon died, taking the place of the human or animal victim not offered.

For us and our new home the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered on nine first Fridays of the month, and I was able to receive Holy Communion at each Mass until the last, and then it may have been that Our dear Lord allowed me to suffer because He lovingly desired to be my Guest. It was worth while being ill, to have the Blessed Sacrament brought down to Mary's Meadow ; this being, in all probability, the first occasion, since the old days of pilgrimage, that He had travelled through the Uncared-for Street, passing His Monastery and the Weeping Cross.

Many a time, in the guise of suffering humanity, was He to be welcomed at our door ; but just this once, at the beginning of our married life, He deigned to come in royal state, beneath the Sacramental veil, as though to say, "I am the Victim Who has been offered for the established happiness of your home." And I was so thankful to have a Catholic husband to arrange my table with vases of flowers and candles, and to lend me his statue of the Sacred Heart, and his "Garden of the Soul."

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There is no sympathy like religious sympathy. I had "passing great joy of him, greatly loving him before all other knights of the world, as of right I ought to do" (like the anchoress in the *Morte d'Arthur*, to whose window came her nephew, Sir Percival de Galis). Often Armel would come to my window, to see how I fared, and I could not help wishing for "a screen to draw back when I held a parliament," a covering-screen of double cloth, black with a cross of white through which the sunshine would penetrate—sign of the Day-Spring from on high. Otherwise my bedroom, with its three openings, was very like the chamber of a recluse. The window from which I could see Our Lady's Bower and meditate upon Heavenly things, was equivalent to her window into the adjoining Church; the door to our dressing-room was equal to her opening to the maiden's room from which she was served; and the door to our Mary-room resembled her parlour window, to which all might come who desired to speak with her.

Playing at being Juliana of Norwich amused me during a long confinement to a small room, which was not amusing in any other way. And best of all Our Lord's revelations to her I found the vision in which He informed her of all that was needful for her to know: "Synne is behovable, but al shal be wel, and al shal be wel, and al manner of thyng shal be wele."

In times of trial and desolation, when everything feels utterly wrong, it is a great comfort to remind oneself continually that "all shall be well"; and after a short course of this exercise (far shorter than one would have

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imagined possible), the future tense becomes the present, and one finds with great relief that really "all *is* well."

How differently things turn out from what one expects! I had planned for my little future Saint to play in the alcove of the Martha-room whilst I was always hard at work; instead of which, so as to be near my sofa she had to bring her toys and bricks on to the wide window-ledge of the Mary-room, facing the Bower. It was undoubtedly better so, but the idea had not occurred to me, and my natural inclination is always to resent anything of which I have not previously thought.

Being unable to get about and work, having to lie useless day after day, almost like being dead, was a splendid corrective for a too energetic temperament; and, although I very often felt that I could hardly bear it, I knew all the while that the enforced idleness was really very instructive and humiliating. The neighbourhood got on just as well, if not better, without me to fuss, and visit the poor, and see to things! It is remarkably good for one to discover that one is not really of the slightest use or importance. Sometimes, before my illness, I thought I was. A long period of inaction helps one to focus one's position in the world, and greatly enhances one's opportunities of practising Sainly Virtues. In times of health and activity one is too apt to lose sight of the paramount importance of resignation to the Will of God.

Lying on the verandah that summer I found time to meditate on many things, and to say many a "Hail,

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Mary," for the passers by ; watching them with satisfaction as they gathered our yellow broom and wandered in our glen. Had I been out and about I should probably have warned them off, being subject to bad attacks of the possessive case, from time to time, when I am off my guard. Fortunately Betty is never possessive. She loves to see other people happy, freely helping themselves to what I am tempted to consider mine.

I have often been asked what I thought about during all those months of inactivity and all those hours of pain. Lying there, looking at the People's Path, I thought of something which Archbishop Ullathorne had said :—

"God beholds the two paths that issue forward from this point of your life, and their end. He says to you, 'Have you most confidence in Me, Whose ways are a mystery, or in Nature, whose ways are manifest? . . . Do you trust to a visible path marked out for you by Nature, or to the invisible path marked out by Faith?'"

I thought of the old legends of Royalty, and of the crown which I had always meant to wear ; long ago I had realized that the only Kingdom is the Kingdom within, and I knew now that the crown was a crown of thorns. I thought of the procession of pilgrims, who would come some day to be healed at Our Lady's Fountain ; each bearing his own burden, and carrying his own cross after the Master ; and I understood that each must play his part well so as not to spoil the long procession. I thought of the People's Path through our Meadow as the threefold mystic way : from the gate to

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the turning down the glen was the Purgative Way, very muddy and sticky, signifying that if you do what you don't like, and don't like, and don't like, then you will get yourself in condition for climbing up the hill, in the Illuminative Way,—still heavy going, but with far more light, and you rise considerably higher. Pausing by the stile at the top, there comes the sight of the tower of St. Lawrence's Church, and the sunset sky, and the glorious view of the hills beyond. In the glen below you see the river through the dark ivy-clad stems of the willow trees, like a peep of the background of Leonardo da Vinci's "Holy Family," and you realize that here is peace at last, and Union with God. You will exclaim with Elsie, in the Golden Legend, when she looked down on Italy from St. Gothard's Pass: "What land is this that spreads itself beneath us? . . . Land of the Madonna! How beautiful it is! It seems a garden of Paradise."

I thought of the time when I told my solicitor that I saw Betty's future home in this very meadow, and of his polite surprise, not knowing how to reply to an argument of that sort! I thought of my dream now as all accomplished—all and more than I had ever hoped for. Only one detail of the vision still remains unfulfilled: still do I see Our Lady's Fountain on the grassy knoll by the winding path; Our Lady holds the Little Lord, and the Little Lord holds out the cup of healing water; and I long for the deaf and dumb, and blind, and crippled pilgrims to come and drink; knowing that when once they have tasted of that cup they will lay aside their

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crutches and go rejoicing home, as they used to do in the merry days of yore.

I see it all so plainly. But no one else does! And when I point it out, even to very dear and intimate friends, they look at me a little anxiously, as if they feared I might not be quite well.

However, all things come to those who are prepared to wait, and suddenly one day, when I was up and out and gardening, the Procession I awaited seemed to come. Undeniably there was the tramp of many human feet along our meadow path. I heard quick, eager women's voices asking where it was supposed to be? Men were explaining, children excitedly were keeping up a fire of rapid questions, and rushing on in front, and doubling back, and nearly falling into the river, their mothers, laden with heavy babies, having got left behind for awhile, amongst the old people and the cripples who brought up the rear. Most of the passing throng, I could not fail to observe, looked well, remarkably well; but beneath the surface (since they were hurrying to my healing waters) there must be sorrows and troubles which I could not see—the procession itself, the procession which I had had in my mind so long, everyone could see, *at last!* I called to Betty, and she shared enthusiastically in my delight. It seemed as though all the inhabitants of the Uncared-for Street were pouring down upon us; and we noticed with immense satisfaction that they never paused until they reached the place of Our Lady's Fountain, literally covering that semi-circle of rising ground. They had come! they had really come!



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No intellectual vision this: here stood a crowd of working men and women in the broad light of day, with upraised faces and expectant eyes. I seized my camera. No one should ever laugh at me again. A snap-shot of this tangible reality would put the question of my Pilgrim's Path beyond suspicion; there should be no more fluctuations of mind respecting the correctness of my statement.

Someone must dream dreams and see visions. I look for the time when the healing waters whose virtuous properties have been forgotten or ignored for more than three hundred years will spring forth again to welcome an awakened faith. This is the stuff my dream is made of. I wondered had the moment come for its fulfilment. The suspense was almost overwhelming. How long after I took the photograph we waited, I cannot say. Then a far-off sound was heard in the distant heavens, a humming noise overhead. Shouts of "He's coming!" "He's a-coming now!" "He's come!" rather took my breath away; but before I had time to realize what was happening, there was a flash in the sky, and the sun shone full on what looked like the outspread wings of a beautiful, enormous, golden dragon-fly!

\* \* \* \* \*

Next day no one denied the evidence of my camera, but the local newspapers offered a different explanation:—"Hucks gave a display of aviation which attracted an immense number of onlookers from all the country round." And as the performance took place just over our meadow, that piece of vantage ground which stands to me for "Our Lady's Fountain," was seized upon by

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the crowd as a likely spot from which to witness the display.

In the mystic game of "let's pretend" the first rule is : Never under any circumstances allow yourself to be disappointed. Betty and I were genuinely glad to have that new photograph to paste in our Idea of Mary's Meadow Scrap-book as a mile-stone. Although not a single member of the crowd had a notion that the spot whereon he stood was holy ground, we still feel that the fact of so many people having stood there brings us immeasurably nearer to the fulfilment of our dream ; and we turn to look at it from time to time whilst we still hopefully await the real Procession.

# BETTY'S BASKET





# V

## BETTY'S BASKET

**T**HERE are baskets—*and* baskets ; but the one I write of does not belong to either category ; although, of course, we have many of those kinds too, all useful in their way, and some of them carrying a pretty history. One dainty gem, painted with crimson cherries, was the gift of a kind friend whose rosy-cheeked little granddaughter, Betty's particular friend, is known by the name of Cherry. Another, equally beautiful, came by the hands of a poor neighbour, to whose lot it had fallen when her mistress died ; and she told us how she remembered the lady being very proud of making it, some thirty years ago, when she was learning basket-making by way of passing the time. She was a wealthy maiden lady, well on in years when I first met her, who strongly disapproved of children, and preferred large dogs. I used to beg her to look at *my* baby, but she never would allow her eyes to rest upon her, not even when she came to tea and Betty sat opposite ! How she would fare in Heaven amongst the Baby-Angels was our concern, when we heard that she was dead, and the unexpected arrival of her

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treasured, home-made basket we took as an assurance that our prayers had been answered. A soul which reaches a state of eternal happiness could no longer be out of sympathy with little children.

But "Betty's Basket" is not either of these.

The washing-basket, which we carry out into the morning garden, when we are going to hang up clothes to dry, in the sunshine and the wind, is large and heavy enough for anything, *I* think ; but not large enough for her purpose, Betty says.

Perhaps my own especial favourite is the garden-basket, which was given me for a wedding present, by a horticultural friend, fitted up with every possible requisite, even to a reel of wire, a hammer, a pencil and a note-book. But these are not the right things, Betty tells me. Can you guess why the basket must be so large ? and what the right things are ?

It was when I was ill, and she had to wait upon me, that she first said she would like to be a nurse for the very poor, and wear a blue dress and a long cloak, and take them all they needed in her basket ; soda and brushes, to clean the baby's bottle ; sheets and frilled pillow-cases for the mother, and a pretty cotton counterpane ; a duck's-wing, matches, firelighters and old gloves in which to do up the grate. Cocoa, tea, sugar, bovril, Swiss milk and biscuits, are also amongst the items on her list.

You see all her life she has gone with me to visit the sick, and she has noticed that although we take them many little things which seem nice and kind and useful

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when we are starting off from home, by the time we reach the sufferer's bedside our presents have assumed a tragically insignificant and inadequate appearance. So on the way home I have encouraged her to make plans for the future, and to fill her Dream-Basket out of the treasures of her generous heart. What she desires is to make everybody happy and well.

A child must look forward to *something*, and prattle about *something*, and it seemed to me all important for a mother to decide *what* it should prattle of, and *what* it should desire. For our objective we decided on the gift of healing. And many a time when Betty was naughty, instead of slapping her I kissed the hands which I prayed might heal the sick; trying to lead her away from thoughtlessness, selfishness, and mischief by explaining how "all creatures obey those who serve God with a perfect mind;" and telling her that "no power on earth could resist a thoroughly detached soul, it might almost be said to participate in God's omnipotence;" setting before her a world-wide, all-embracing mission of heroic charity. Here lies the secret of the marvellous deeds of so many Saints!

We do not read the half-penny papers, or think of railway accidents, and fires, and floods, and wars and famines. I knew a man once whose mind was filled with spiritual doubts, and who said he could never believe in the mercy of God, because of all the misery in the East End; yet this very man never did a hand's turn to relieve the troubles near his own back door! Betty has not heard of the miseries of the East End; but what she

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has been taught is to hold herself in readiness to relieve the sufferings nearer home. "Because I reign, I serve," is the invisible motto on the handle of her Basket. Wherever we are wanted, we go. When we are not quite certain of being wanted, we walk up and down near the house where some one is lying ill, sending kind thoughts and saying the Rosary.

"If you know any one who prays, ask her to pray for me," said a poor old man in the Workhouse Infirmary, to his lady visitor, a little while ago ; adding, "I do not want to be cured ; I only want the grace to bear my pain." Directly his message reached us, of course we went, and were greatly edified by his patience and resignation. The grace to suffer was vouchsafed to him ; and a week later we were immensely thankful to hear that his sufferings were considerably less.

With prayers, I must admit we have better fortune than with puddings. Before now a lemon-flavoured custard, which was intended to be delicious, has proved unpalatable to an invalid without much appetite ; and her little sister has candidly informed us that, "Polly thought it horrid, and said she couldn't swallow a mouthful."

"We are keeping it for her supper in the oven, you see," remarked the tactful mother of the family, anxious lest we might take offence. "But she won't eat it for her supper," persisted the infant, "she says it tastes so horrid." And I could not help admiring that baby's instinct for the truth, almost as much as the mother's delicacy of feeling.



## BETTY'S BASKET

The kindness of the poor in covering over the follies of their visitors, fills me with admiration. Once when I gave, as I imagined, a bowl of dripping to a hungry family, holding out the hope that now their mother would be able to make them a large cake, they vied with each other in keeping from me the secret that it was only a basin of water with a thin coating of grease upon the top ! Fruit is, of course, a safe and welcome present ; and kindest of all, sometimes, is a shilling or a sixpence with which the invalid can gratify a fevered imagination.

There is nothing like being ill yourself to help you to understand the feelings and fancies of the sick. So, for future reference, Betty asked me to jot down her own impressions of a fortnight's ill-health:—"It is horrible being made to eat food when you feel you do not want it. It is nice just to be left alone. When you want something, it is nice to have *a little*. What *is* delightful is to have a present of eggs, packed in an old cracker-box, with funny faces painted on them, each dressed in a little blue or pink cocked hat, made of paper, with a feather pasted on one side. It is great fun comparing them, seeing which is the funniest, which is the saddest, and then choosing which you will have boiled for tea. Eggs like this are so amusing that you even think you would like another ; only when it comes you find you cannot eat it, and you feel sad and leave half, and tell Mother that the first egg was the best ! Grapes are delicious at any time, and jelly is lovely in the night ; but milk you soon get tired of ; and lemon-juice is only

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refreshing until your lips crack, and after that you can't bear it. The one thing, night or day, that is always lovely, simply *lovely*, is cold water. And I think Our dear Lord knew how very much a child wants water, when He said: 'Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, Amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.'"

Of course, you might ask, what was I thinking about to let poor little Betty get so ill? There was a cold wind, and our colds were rather bad, but that was all it seemed to be one evening; and next morning when it was not really time for me to wake her, and I had not quite decided if I ought to do so, she appeared at my bedroom door ready dressed for Mass, having heard me moving about and being fearful lest I might go off to Church without her. It was "our Friday," so, although her cough seemed hard and troublesome, I let her start. Half way she felt so ill that her courage nearly failed. "But I'm going on," she said, "because the Saints always went on"; so on we went. She could hardly crawl, and after a few more minutes it became evident that "Prudence" must take her back to bed. Her imaginary nurse is called Prudence, because St. Bernard says: "This is the guide to all the virtues"; and the catechism declares that she dictates what is best to be done so as to act according to God's Will.

When eventually I reached our little Church it was to find that there would be no Mass that morning! Is it not difficult, under such circumstances, to pray

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happily? You *know* that if you make a spiritual Communion it is just as pleasing to Our Lord, and your best self is glad that *someone* should be kneeling there to honour His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament; but you *feel* terribly vexed at there being no Mass, and your worst self says: "I might just as well have stayed in bed, or at any rate, I could have had a cup of tea before setting out."

After a quarter of an hour spent in a battle of this sort, I hurried back to my little daughter—and sent for the doctor. Perhaps it was from that Friday Communion, of which we were so unexpectedly deprived, that we received the grace to carry us through the next few weeks of pain and sickness and high temperature and broken nights. A time of great grace we found it. Betty had seldom been ill before this attack, and as she looks forward to spending many years of her life in nursing other people, she really welcomed the opportunity of gaining first-hand knowledge of sick rooms and medicines and disinfectants and all the tiresome, tiring details that go to make up the paraphernalia of an infectious disease. There are many things which can only be learned by practical experience. How to amuse a child and keep it happy when everything it touches will have to be disinfected or destroyed was one of the most important things that we discovered; and in case you ever know of any little children suffering in the same way, I must tell you that a threepenny box of coloured crayons and a few penny outline drawing books, or "Books for the Bairns"

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("Cecily and the Birds" and "The Legend of the Birch Tree" being specially attractive), will provide delightful occupation for many a day. "Light to hold up, if you want to hold them up," says Betty, "and very nice to read."

During her confinement to bed the doctor had feared she would be miserable. Not a bit of it! She enjoyed the novelty of the whole thing, I believe. She was certainly deeply sensible of every kindness. Every time the front door bell rang, and I brought in another parcel, she thanked God for having given her so many loving friends. Flowers also gave her great pleasure. A little bouquet of aubretia, violets, snowdrops and polyanthus—red, yellow, and deep maroon with an edging of gold—placed on the window-sill to catch the light, was a source of much joy, and really rather wonderful as her garden's offering for the first week in February! Flowers will always find a place in Betty's Basket—symbolical of the kind thoughts which fill her heart. If she dies before she has been able to accomplish all her plans, she is going to ask God to let her spend her Heaven in helping Ludlow. It is the age of young Saints. We have the "Praise of Glory," who obtains us grace to suffer; the "Little Flower," who helps us to balance our accounts; and "Little Nellie," who inspires us to emulate her love of "Holy God." Who knows what graces and blessings Betty, if she gives her whole heart to Our dear Lord, may be allowed to bring down from the Throne on high to her birthplace in her Heavenly Basket!

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An unknown friend writes to tell me that she has had hot arguments over my adopted daughter's bringing up. "I maintain," she says, "that with God's grace she need not be a prig or consider herself apart and different from her fellow beings ; though she may have a fearful amount of suffering when she comes in contact with our very material world—and loses her illusions."

Is it not rather a belief in the unseen things which makes possible the right use and enjoyment of the seen ? And probably Betty, in her visits to the poor, *has* come in contact with sin and suffering to a degree not usually permitted to so young a child. She has not been sheltered from the world ; only from the world's point of view. Armel impresses upon her that good is positive ; evil negative. And I quote from Browning's Abt Vogler : "For evil, so much good more." Where we feel that God's Laws have been forgotten, lilies and roses, jellies and sympathy, are intermingled with our prayers—prayers for a baby who may not bear its father's name, and a mother without a ring. Betty has always understood that not only must marriages be registered in a book, before a man and woman can expect to live happily together ; but *God's blessing* must be asked upon their union. Without these preliminary precautions, as we see on all sides, come sorrow and remorse, and because of this sorrow, and because of this sin, our own acts of Faith, Hope and Charity must abound the more. This is the reason why the best lilies from our garden were taken to the death-bed of that poor soul who for the third and last time forgot the

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necessity of the blessing and the wedding ring. And had we not loved her so, she would have supposed it impossible for God still to care for her, she said. Without our visits, and without our flowers, she would have died in agony and despair. That she sent for a Priest at the eleventh hour, and had her baby baptized, and made her peace with God, and was received into the Church, was a miracle, he told us—as surely a miracle as any of which he had ever heard.

So for our consolation the remembrance of this miracle is carried about with us, whenever we have to go on a particularly difficult and delicate mission, in Betty's Basket. And for the rest I must ask you to believe that it is not filled with illusions. *It is simply packed with Love.*

# ARTLESS FINANCE







## VI

### ARTLESS FINANCE

**I**MPRUDENT speculation of any kind allures me irresistibly. After puzzling out that riddle about the hundred animals which cost one hundred pounds (deer five pounds, sheep one pound, and rabbits one shilling) at the age of ten, I became inordinately fond of making calculations ; and it seemed quite natural that, as time went on, Financial papers should take the place of Euclid and Algebra. So I studied the money markets, and became wonderfully successful, or clever, at buying and selling—buying when there was a scare of war or a threatened railway strike, and selling as soon as the half-penny papers had started some new sensation for the public at large.

It seemed very easy, a delightful sort of game ; and when all one's rash investments turn out trumps, how can one be expected to believe the old wiseacre once-bitten-twice-shy kind of friend, who warns one that it is the height of folly to put capital into any concern yielding more than three and a half or four per cent. ? Everyone I knew wanted a larger income, and so did I ; there was nothing very strange in that, though

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perhaps it was strange that even then I wanted it for the most part to give away, and after all one has to learn by experience.

Sooner or later there seems to come to all investors a period of unaccountable carelessness, or inconceivable recklessness, or sheer bad luck—or it may be that a child has ear-ache. In my case Betty was ill, and all business had to be neglected; important documents could not be found; telegrams necessitating an immediate answer were simply set aside; whilst to crown all, a threatened strike really did take place and upset all my calculations.

After the crash it is no use attempting to analyse these things. To my mind the story of Job supplies the most satisfactory explanation. One day his servants came and told him that all his oxen, and asses, and sheep, and camels, and children were gone; one day a wire from my broker announced a somewhat similar fate to me; and as the reason given by the devil for Job's great trial was that he wanted to find out whether under such circumstances that simple and upright man would still be disposed to serve God, I have great hopes that in my case the reason may have been the same. It was a process well adapted for testing qualification. Amongst other things I had shares in a mine. The best definition of a mine that I have ever heard is, "a hole in the ground owned by a liar." It was exactly that kind of mine, and when I found it out the shares were still selling at a large price. It would have been quite easy to have cleared out at a considerable profit. We were not without good friends, who, knowing all the

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circumstances of the case, urged upon us such a course of procedure; but the conscience of a simple, upright man does not allow him to sell shares which he knows to be worthless even in an open market.

Not for nothing was I wedded to a man like Job! Together we watched all our hopes of an income for the future dwindling down to zero—and then the valueless certificates formed our burnt-offering. For a consolation I now picture some poor widow, with a large family of orphan children, who might have bought those shares, and who was enabled by our sacrifice to invest her savings in a sounder species of property. It really may be so—one can never tell.

Having thus reached the very limit of hand-to-mouth poverty, we thanked God that henceforth we should be free from care. The Lord's Prayer admirably expressed our needs; and that was certainly a great thing gained. For the future I resolved to take advice—the Saints' advice, and to try their methods of finance.

St. Francis of Assisi recommended us to work for God, and to trust Him for the payment.

St. Francis of Sales said: "Ask for nothing and refuse nothing."

St. Ignatius said: "You must surrender yourselves entirely into God's Hands, and trust to His sweet providence."

"Casting myself wholly on God's Fatherly Providence, I renounce all care and solicitude for to-morrow concerning anything belonging to this life," said the Venerable Father Baker.

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"Keep close to the Will of your Adorable Master," wrote Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity; "look upon each joy and each suffering as coming directly from Him, and your life will be a continual Communion, for all things will be like a Sacrament coming from God to you."

"When we know how to unite ourselves to God and to His Holy Will, accepting whatever He decrees, we possess everything," said St. Teresa. But to follow St. Teresa, besides faith, one requires a merry sense of humour. There come times when for a reward it feels as if one were *too* tired—oh! *so* tired—when one has terrible neuralgia all Church time, and when one gets soaked to the skin again on the walk home, to find no fire, no dinner, and no dry clothes. In such a condition it is very difficult to remember that one really does possess everything! but it helps considerably to recollect how under very trying circumstances she once exclaimed: "Oh, Lord! when wilt Thou cease to strew our path with obstacles?"

And the Lord spoke to her and answered: "Murmur not, for thus it is that I treat My *Friends*."

At which St. Teresa (humorous even in her prayers) sighed again, and said: "Ah, dear Lord! and that is why Thou hast so few!"

I think that the whole point of our present system of artless finance is that at the Judgment-Day we look forward to being recognized as *friends*.

Our porch, with its box-seat and flap-table, is something more than an outlet for Betty's energy. Under whatever disguise suffering humanity comes knocking

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at our door, she never fails to recognize that it is *He!* And as charity, like a sea of love, covers a multitude of sins, I cannot help hoping that by now our sins lie buried beneath two thousand cups of tea. For us a hand-to-mouth existence chiefly means ours are the hands and theirs the mouths to feed. But this is as it should be, for one of my great ambitions has always been that the steps to our door may be worn away by the feet of the poor. A travelling tinker, who led his pony up after him, assisted enormously, I must acknowledge, towards the appearance of destruction !

“Five steps at the gate and three steps at the door,” we often remind our visitors in the dark ; and the Pilgrim Christ knows that three stand for Faith, Hope and Charity ; and that five are in honour of His five Wounds. Many sad hearts and wounded limbs come to be healed with sympathy, and boracic ointment and linen rags ; and we find ourselves better able to sympathize with the wants of the poor now that we know what it means to have nothing, and no one to turn to but God. Golden hearts are much easier to cultivate in a meadow where “the root of all evil” has been done away. Our present Coin of the Realm is a picture of the Holy Face, before which a lamp burns in an alcove in our Martha-room ; and a book, in which we write the names of all those whose troubles we are not able to relieve immediately, lies ever before this inexhaustible treasury.

Very naturally, worldly-minded people think us rich and eccentric ; or if indeed convinced that we are really

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poor, they feel bound to censure our imprudence. That St. Francis of Assisi said, "I will not be a thief; it would be reckoned to us as theft if we gave not to one in greater need," conveys no meaning at all to the generality of minds. Perhaps only he, who named the birds his "little sisters," fully understands how, in following in his footsteps, our thoughts are borne upon the wings of our spiritual desires far above the earth. The world's prudence and its conventions are nothing to us; not that we defy the world on its own ground, but simply because we move in another sphere of thought where these things have no part.

The secret of our philosophy is that we try *to give* instead of trying *to get*. Everyone will admit that "Give and Take" is a lovely motto—so long as you are prepared to give, whilst others take. But it is one thing to have a transcendental ideal, and quite another to live up to it; and we are kept for ever humble by the *Treatise on Heroic Virtue*, in which Benedict XIV. lays down that excellence in the virtues cannot be said to be proved by acts however manifold and heroic, unless such acts are elicited promptly, easily, and with delight.

Practice, of course, makes perfect; and, what with a door bell and a penny post, the man or woman intent on acquiring the habit of giving, in an intense degree, is not without opportunity. Three times a day in the letter-box at our gate, and at all hours, from early morn to dewy eve, upon the box-seat at our door, we find the opportunities to hand. Some people want our time, and some our money; but whether it be an editor ask-

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ing for manuscripts "for the love of God," in support of some good cause, or a fellow authoress whose sister is ill, and whose loving endeavours to provide necessities are inadequately remunerated by magazines knowing nothing of the disadvantages under which she writes, we make it our aim never to refuse.

"When you see anyone standing in need of assistance, do not ask yourself why someone else did not help him, but think to yourself that you have found a treasure," remarked some spiritual financier, whose name at the moment I forget; and, acting on this advice, we have found treasures numberless.

Years ago I just treated the poor *as* poor, feeling sorry for them, and trying to be kind, but it did not answer. Taken on that level one has no remedy, nothing to fall back on, when one is disappointed or deceived; when they tell tales of each other; when people blame one for indiscretion. Betty, I resolved, should receive the poor in the Person of Christ alone, and her charities should be offered for His sake only. No failure would be possible then, and there could be no fear of disappointment; she would rise above all earthly considerations, believing that our worldly goods being lent by God are borrowed from the poor, so that when she gave them anything she would give them back their own. But it even makes Betty laugh when I say, "Thank you for lending me your hat last summer," as I hand the needed head-dress to a stranger at the door. However, surprise and laughter are, I take it, all part of the game of love. That woman with the bad eyes,

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to whom St. Francis "returned" a mantle containing twelve loaves of bread, at first imagined that it must be a joke! Not till she realized that Brother Warden was in earnest did she accept the gift, rejoicing and praising the Lord.

Some of the poor are easier than others, I must admit, to treat in this way. Once for three days running I "returned" walking shoes, and house shoes, and felt slippers, to a woman with a mania for gathering watercress on rainy days. That woman proved a regular Turk for shoes, and I began to understand how it is that those who really mean to follow Christ must follow Him barefoot. It was almost more than my patience could endure. It did seem such an unnecessary waste to spoil good leather going after watercress which no one wanted to buy. Yet the woman looked so draggled and pitiable a sight on her return journey that Betty had to make a purchase, without letting her know we grow far nicer cress in our own little pool down by the river.

In the old days when I called a beggar a beggar, I used to get dreadfully vexed with the women who dragged their wretched sick babies all round the country, in the pouring rain, trying to sell packets of needles and pins to householders who didn't want to buy. The stock-in-trade got ruined; the babies, naturally, got very much worse; and the women came whining at my door to ask if I could help them, complaining of having only taken one penny as the result of the whole day's outing.



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"Our Lady and the Little Lord," whispers Betty nowadays, before I can give vent to my exasperation; and then I know they only look like that to remind us of the closed doors at Bethlehem.

"It takes three generations to make a gentleman," the old adage tells us, and sometimes I feel as if it must take thirty to make a woman *really gentle*—or even more, as many generations as from Eve to Mary. In spite of the best resolutions in the world one is always forgetting, and falling back to the hereditary standpoint.

"That dreadful old man again!" I am apt to exclaim when I catch a glimpse of a certain ragged, filthy creature coming up the path: I simply can't rise to thinking of his dirty old sack, and his importunity, as representative of our Pilgrim Christ; and standing near him I forget all the sweet things Yvette Guilbert used to say about her heart being touched "by the smell of the poor." Betty has to open the door, because to her the case presents less difficulty. "O! Mummy, how can you say that about Our Lord?" she cries, quite shocked. "He only dresses up like that to see if we shall know Him, and I always know Him in a minute." These people with cats'-eyes, and what looks like dirty cotton wool stuck round their jaws, prefer to deal with her: so does the little old woman who asks for sewing in a voice like a weeny baby. One day, intending to be kind, I offered her some sewing to do for us, but she looked pathetic, saying she was over eighty, and her eyes were getting dim. She borrows "three pence till Friday," and says the following week, "now I shall owe you six-

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pence," or ninepence, as the case may be, until the debt is forgiven; and then she starts afresh. To the child, who waits upon her, she really seems rather amusing, and clever at arithmetic; and she brings a hand-basket in case we may give her more than she is able to carry away in a parcel, which testifies to a provident disposition worthy of having fallen on better days.

Another of Betty's special clients is the poor old deaf and dumb carpenter who carves little stools,—they do so beautifully for the dolls to sit on; but when I found that he could manufacture stools much faster than I could earn half-crowns, I hit on the effective plan of asking for a *prie-dieu* chair, giving him measurements and half the money in advance. That was about a year ago, and he has not yet returned.

\* \* \* \* \*

In a financial world of this sort the question may arise, "Where does the money come from? You can't be always giving without having something to give! So how do you get it?" One answer would be to say that we work all day and write far into the night, and that although nearly all our labours go unpaid, it is perhaps indirectly from our work that our resources come. Anyhow, I take it, this is St. Francis of Assisi's grand idea. Somehow the balance *does* remain well kept. One stands continually on the edge of a precipice without ever actually toppling over.

It may be someone sends a postal order for a book, or stamps for a song, or a publisher forwards royalties, or an editor a cheque, or a little legacy arrives in the

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very nick of time. Or it may be that a loving hand places a parcel of groceries in our porch-box—that happened when our need was quite extreme, and was a kindly deed for which my gratitude will never die. On another occasion a five pound note turned up anonymously, at exactly the right moment to cover a debt which would otherwise have kept me awake at night and gone far to turn my hair grey. Once a dear friend, whose sister had died, sent us some enormous parcels of clothes, which made the postman laugh, and for that winter we had no lack of good things to give away.

At Christmas time it has happened that on starting out with immense faith and a long list of cottagers who must—who simply *must*—receive those presents to which the habits of a lifetime have accustomed them, Betty and I have met the postman with the very sum we needed in a letter from an unexpected quarter.

And sometimes when it is for the expenses of a journey, the journey of a son to his mother which takes place annually, and is to me a sacred trust that must at all costs be fulfilled ; although the day before there has seemed no possibility of raising two golden sovereigns, towards evening a well-dressed stranger has walked up the path, requiring singing lessons next term, for which he wishes to be allowed to pay in advance.

And once, just once, when the journey was an act of reparation, when the call was very urgent, and the suffering intense, and there seemed to be nobody else quite qualified to fill the breach, the ten shillings needed

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to reach the desecrated shrine almost appeared to fall from Heaven. Loving the family and knowing that their fault could only have been one of ignorance, I felt convinced that this calamity had fallen upon them for the Glory of God ; so Betty and I made bold to kneel before our picture of the Holy Face and demand a miracle. Our hearts were so aching with sympathy that it did not feel presumptuous ; the master of the house had gone out to see if there was anything payworthy which could be done ; and half an hour later to our great delight—though not, I must say, in the least to our surprise—he walked in quite unconscious of anything very extraordinary having happened, with half a sovereign in his hand. He had just found it shining before him in the middle of the road! . . . So we went, and prayed for forgiveness on the spot where the Holy Sacrifice used to be offered, and a complete recovery ensued.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now would you not say our way of living is a real financial success ? To be able under such circumstances, in the twentieth century, to exist at all—*that* is the miracle ! I think.

Of course you might describe this state of things as “just a bare existence” ; yet eternal life has been summed up as “perfect correspondence, with a perfect environment,” and I know the Saint of Poverty would say we live—*we live*.

OUR NEST AMONGST THE  
STARS





## VII

### OUR NEST AMONGST THE STARS

IT is not easy to be "happily married." At the end of a fairy-tale it sounds inevitable and delightful; they "live happily ever afterwards" quite as a matter of course; but in real life almost any married couple would tell you how it is after the wedding day that the real difficulties begin. And the only way to surmount them is, I believe, to climb. Each day, to a climbing soul, life becomes more and more simple, there are fewer differences, fewer difficulties, fewer disappointments.

There was an idiotic riddle about "Why is a mouse when it sings?" which everybody I met asked me some years ago; and had the question been how to be happy though married? the answer, "Because the higher you go, the fewer," would have been a really clever solution of a world-wide problem. Where the climbing soul is a loving wife, she finds her peace, joy, and ambition, her health of soul, and mind, and body, all one and the same thing—established and accomplished in the heart of her Beloved. Armel and Obedience are my Alpha and Omega. "What you think you become," Gautama

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said, and Ruskin only repeated the same idea when he advised us to make ourselves nests of pleasant thoughts. Happiness is very much a habit of mind, and the art of being happy is certainly an art worth cultivating. I expect there comes to every married woman, at some time or other, a temptation *not* to be happy, and the great thing is to recognize it as a temptation—the will and the feelings cannot be in immediate accord.

Even Rome was not built in a day! and I think it no shame to confess that our nest was not built in three years. If a woman is fearfully enthusiastic, and keen on having her own way, it is not absolutely impossible, during the first years of married life, “to have rows”—even with a kindred soul. Judged by the standard of that lady in “The Fathers in the Desert,” who preferred a companion “with a sour temper, an unruly tongue, and perpetual contradictions and reproaches,” I cannot say that my Beloved is “of essential service to my soul”; but I have some hopes I may have been to his! And as I have made known the fact that my adopted daughter suffered at one time from the effects of dual personality, it seems only fair to admit that her Mummy was temporarily afflicted with a “Susan” too.

Now the higher you go, the fewer Susans there are; or, at all events, fewer occasions present themselves for her outbursts of vehement and exhausting individuality; and the Master of Mary's Meadow, perspicaciously recognizing this truth, set to work at once to build for his bride a nest amongst the stars. “My wife is



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perfect ; she can do no wrong," was the foundation upon which he built.

How often Susan's impatience and self-will pulled to pieces and destroyed every atom of that lovely nest, would be too sad to relate ! Next day his Violet would weep over the ruthless destruction, and help him to begin to build again. And he, apparently unconscious of Susan and her wanton ways, would always say, when he was asked, that the nest was getting on beautifully—*that* being his chivalrous notion of a husband's loyalty. Also I find in his treasured little volume of Carthusian Devotions that he has marked the Reverend Michael of Coutances' prayer : "May I make my nest in Thy Wounds," which explains a willingness to suffer.

It may be one thing or it may be another, it does not really matter in the least what you quarrel about, so long as you do quarrel. In our case the difficulty was *moles*—whether the moles who "humpettied" the well-rolled paths and newly-laid lawns ought or ought not to be trapped and destroyed ? He thought of them as tiresome animals, "those animals again !" when day after day fresh heaps of newly-grubbed-up earth were found disfiguring the garden—from his point of view. I thought of them as soft, dark, velvety little people, living their own deep, wonderful lives below the level of the meadow which we called our own. I pictured them, with their wives and families, going long journeys, prospecting the land to find provisions for the future ; and I could well imagine Mr. Mole's delight in the worms he caught when he was shovelling away the earth

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beneath our lawn with his strong hands. Of course, when he wanted to get rid of the loose soil he poked it above ground with his snout. I loved to think of those energetic noses, and those broad, flat, pink, useful hands. I loved Mr. Bachelor Mole, and Lord and Lady Mole, and all the little Moles; and I honestly believed that they were a serviceable and necessary adjunct to our land. Hitherto I had gladly collected their tumps as being the very thing I needed for special cuttings and seed borders—they saved me all the trouble of sifting earth.

And for caressing! I knew of nothing, save the crimson and silver satin of the not-yet-unfolded leaves of our young copper beech, which could compare with the little moles we sometimes discovered on a warm summer evening poking about in the hedges, looking for slugs and snails.

Well, everyone cannot be expected to think alike; and there were scalding tears shed over this first difference of opinion. On my Beloved's part, surprise at such a trifling thing affecting me so deeply; on my part, intense compunction that our home's ruling principle of "Welcome to All" should be thus violated.

Do you wonder how the matter ended? or do you guess? In the end I just gave in; seeing that so long as one eats meat there is no consistency in an avowed disapproval of taking animal life; yet not being sufficiently well instructed in the art of stewing celery leaves to be able to avoid causing some interruption in the Procession of Life.

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During the early days of each succeeding May, tender caresses might still be offered to the unequalled softness of those unfolded leaves of the copper beech, and perhaps when one "puts on perfection, and a woman's name" one ceases to care so very much for moles! Anyhow, my Beloved considered it was of less importance for animals to burrow in our meadow than for him to make a nest amongst the stars for me.

He wanted *some* spot, on the top of a tree, or the top of a bank, which he could really call his own—a place to which no one would ever come, and where there would be none of my "little miracles," which have such a greedy way of overflowing from Our Lady's Bower, into the porch, the verandah, and even the Martha-Room. "The very flowers are sacred to the Poor." And it must be trying to a man when he comes home tired to find the whole place filled with strangers of all ages and sizes being fed and bandaged and prayed for! He wrote a poem about it called "Christ's Violet," explaining how though, as my husband, he could not help feeling a little jealous of all these poor people and Saturday Children with their sorrows and sores, and their innumerable wants and ways, yet knowing that I give myself to them, so utterly, for Christ's sake, "the Christ in him says, 'Thank you,' to His Bride."

All the same, poetry apart, that is an enormous height to live on without intermission, he declared.

"Thirty-three years did St. Simeon Stylites stand upon his pillar," I suggested.

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"But then he wasn't married! and that just makes all the difference in these matters," says my man.

So when the Spring came, and the birds all began to be busy building, my Beloved wanted a nest also—just for himself and me.

You might imagine that out of three and a quarter acres of meadow some few square yards could without difficulty have been set aside for our own use; but it was not so. Before our marriage, every scrap of the meadow had been mapped out in my own mind; and although to a casual observer there were many vacant spaces where an arbour could have been set up, I always answered, "No, that is the children's play-ground," or "these are the Alms-houses," or, "this is Our Lady's Fountain"; which argument was all the more alarming for being absolutely invisible. Yet, "all that now enchants me, from the day on which it should be touched, would melt away!"

"The heighty place" which my Beloved finally selected for our nest was my Mother's tower, from where I play that she watches over our married life; and as there is not really any material building there at all, and as on earth she was a most submissive wife, and must have reached Heaven, I believe, long, long ago, and as I feel sure she loves and delights in her son-in-law, nearly as much as I do, I thought it would please her more if I gave way about that steep bank all covered with primroses, and red campion, and white stitchwort and golden bracken. So I promised not to be dog-in-

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the-mangerish with Mother's watch-tower, and let him build his nest up at the top.

When my Beloved makes a thing he makes it so that everyone can see—which is where we differ. I think it all out very carefully, and draw plans with detailed measurements, and cut out pictures from *Country Life*, which are as nearly like it as another photograph can be, and I go so far sometimes as to paste them into my Idea of Mary's Meadow Scrap-book; and then I consider that the thing exists, and I point it out to my friends in passing and tell them it is there, and if they don't know me very well, they naturally suppose I am rather mad! I cannot blame them; although on this account I should never dream of altering my most satisfactory, time-honoured, methodical system of creation.

Quite contrariwise, *he* did his work with a spade; first cutting out a three-cornered foundation in the solid clay, then paving the floor with flat, grey stones, and planting real yews and roses across the outer side. He also made steps, which anyone could see, all the way up the bank, to get to it. When it was finished the most matter-of-fact kind of person in the whole world could not have denied that it was there. No one ever calls my Beloved mad, though of course anybody who intended to be nasty might have declared it was more like a garden arbour than a bird's nest! To such a prosaic mind the term "Poet" would appear to be a sufficiently vituperative epithet; and the original of Mr. Arnold Mason's picture, which was recently exhibited in the Walker Gallery at Liverpool has been able so far to survive the pseudonym.

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Perhaps only a poet would be able to say, truthfully, that his wife appears to him, "all glorious, like a King's daughter," when she stands up there, amongst the roses, in her sacking apron, a coloured scarf tied, gypsy-wise, round her neck, and with stray wisps of hair escaping from beneath the white veil on her head: "By that single hair that fluttered on my neck and seen by Thee—Thou did'st look again upon it, and wert by it drawn to me," said the Bride in that exquisite poem by St. John of the Cross.

"Knit and bound and held together by a single hair of thine," quotes my Beloved to me.

For years I had thought that he loved me because of my high ideals, and it was rather a shock when at last he admitted that it really was not that at all—he had just fallen in love with the shape of the back of my head! What a come down! But one has to make allowances for the grandson of an A.R.A., who probably inherits an incorrigible love of beauty, and really could not help preferring the companion of a lifetime to have regular features. Still, it was a blow. I felt dreadfully disappointed when he told me that he would never have married a woman who was not good looking.

Such a statement hardly seemed to tally with a sacking apron! However, it was spiritual beauty he spoke of, not what the world calls prettiness, and he went on to explain that a Catholic may look old, and tired, and ill, and still be beautiful, because with the following of a straight path to a fixed goal there comes an expression of eye, which is otherwise unattainable.

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Beautiful thoughts and noble aims give to the countenance a still, clear, steadfast look, as if in everything the soul saw God alone.

Never seeing a Lady's Paper, and very seldom a fashionably-dressed woman, one may live quite happily unconscious of being behind the times ; and not only that, but strangest of all, even occasional visitors from a place called the World, in discussing topics of mutual interest, seem only conscious of the fact that eternity lies before us.

How very kind dear St. Elizabeth of Hungary has been to me ! I had hardly dared to hope that anyone but she could have a husband like the Landgrave of Thuringia, and friends with heavenly vision like those ambassadors from her father's Court. Now sitting with my Beloved, in our nest amongst the stars, I think so much of her, and of that loveliest of love scenes, when she discovered the badge of red cloth in her husband's purse. Louis, after an earnest conference with the Bishop, had accepted the "red Christ-flower" from his hands, but concealed it for a time so that Elizabeth might enjoy a season of unclouded happiness. Then one evening, playfully, she loosened her husband's belt, and began to examine the contents of his purse, laughing, as she laid first one thing and then another in her lap. But at length, when she drew out the Crusader's Badge, she did not speak a word ; her face grew white, she gazed from it to him, and then fell forward in a dead swoon.

Louis had held his breath whilst she was taking out

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the things, making no effort to prevent her, because he thought perhaps it was the Will of God that she should know it now. He held her in his arms, and said, so tenderly, when consciousness returned, "Dear sister, what I have done is for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

And she said, "Dear brother, stay with me, if it be not against God's Will."

And he said, "Dear sister, give me leave to go, for so I have vowed"; and hearing this, Elizabeth gave her will unto God's will; and for this, O Queen of Women! I chose you in the days of my romantic girlhood, and I choose you still, in the days of my own happy married life, best and dearest friend of my heart, coming down to us through seven long centuries, centuries which may have changed in nearly everything but this glorious example of a wife's true love. She said to her Beloved, having made *their* nest amongst the stars, "I would not keep you against God's good liking. And may God grant you ever to do as He would have you. You and me I have offered up to Him. In the Holy Name you shall ride forth."

O to meet such a woman in Heaven! and to have a little share in her reward. She had no reward on earth. She was barely twenty years old, when she went down the rugged track from the castle—the daughter of a long line of Kings—an outcast. And her humble follower of the present day, walking down in her own unclouded happiness from that nest where her Beloved has been telling her about his "dream home" of the



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days gone by, and how this place at once recalled to him some of Andrew Marvell's gems; quoting, "To her the meadow sweetness owes," and those four following, wonderful lines about the river—her humble follower of the present day, makes bold to put her own interpretation on "perfection and a woman's name"; and though her Christian name may be significant of humility, and faithfulness, and sweetness, and her married surname may suggest an ancient ancestry of Catholic Kings; the name which she so dearly values, which finds its justification in the elbow of her blouse, the hem of her skirt, and the condition of her garden shoes, the name which she is really *proud* of, is just the name her husband calls her—"Rags!"

(Armel particularly wishes me to call your attention to the fact that in this paper Betty has not been mentioned once !)



# THE GARDEN OF MY SOUL





## VIII

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OUR methods of horticulture have been called "ingenuous"; ingenious would be an equally descriptive term.

When I resolved to be sweet, only to think nice things and talk about nice things, I decided that the safest topic of conversation was a garden. Discussing people, especially mutual friends—"Isn't it a pity Mrs. So-and-So does such and such a thing?"—invariably leads to trouble. One needs more tact than I possess not to get caught out, and have some perfectly innocent remark repeated in a way that must give pain or cause annoyance.

Llewelyn's golden rule, always to speak as if the person spoken of were present, has a sad habit of escaping from my memory just at the critical moment. So after that inevitable and never-to-be-forgotten *débâcle* from the consequences of which he flew all across England to rescue me at a moment's notice, breaking off all his engagements like the dear brother he always was and is, I resolved never to run the risk of falling into this trap again. "For the future I shall

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only talk of flowers," I said, "and whatever anyone may say in the way of gossip, I shall look as if I did not follow it at all, and ask her if she would like to have some pink encrusted saxifrage for her rockery, by way of abruptly breaking off the conversation." I believe there is more pink encrusted saxifrage in the world now than there was ten years ago—and less gossip.

"Rather stupid and uninteresting to talk to, but decidedly kind and generous in giving flowers to strangers, and in employing anybody who comes to ask for work ; and, yes, well, I *have* noticed it, she certainly never does say a word against anyone."

However, all this is only by the way. You have now arrived within the Garden of my Soul. It took me twenty years to think the system out, and ten more to put it into thorough-going working order, and now, as a result, if nothing grew, humanly speaking, one could not feel surprised.

The extraordinary thing is that nearly all our plants *do* flourish ! and with such unprecedented luxuriance of growth and blossom, that visitors are continually asking us to let them know the secret. Well, the secret is we have a gardener—such a gardener ! we call him "Legion," because we never know his real name, and he has a different face each time. He turns up when he is wanting work, and stays for as many hours as he can spare, or we can afford. They are short hours when he has to hurry on to a job he has heard of somewhere down in South Wales ; or when he wants to get to Cleobury Mortimer by to-morrow morning to call at the

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Post Office for a letter he is expecting from his sister, with some money in it: they are long, long hours when he has called at many post offices, and there has never been a letter, and he has lost all heart. Such a case of extreme depression requires a hedge to trim, or some straightforward piece of digging where he can go ahead with no fear of making a mistake—the fear is mine, not his. Should he be set to work in the flower-garden, I watch him, with trepidation, from an upper window, and go down and thank him when he has cut off all the heads of my treasured campanulas with his spade “to leave the top of the rockery nice and tidy.”

You see, we employ our gardener for the sake of making *him* happy, and when he misunderstands our instructions to prune the currant bushes and cuts them all down with an axe, or when he roots up and burns those precious dead flowers that we had been saving for the sake of their seed, *that* does not matter in the least so long as he leaves off with the pleasant feeling of having given satisfaction. Many a note-book have I filled, in between times of cultured amiability and really warrantable exasperation, with all our little garden secrets, called “The Things that Matter and the Things that *Don't*.”

When the Gardener looks tired and old and feeble, and out of consideration I have set him down comfortably, with bucket and knife and kneeling-mat to weed a shady path, it does not matter a bit if he promptly elects to leave it because he does not like the ants, and occupies himself in pulling out all my valuable little

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rock plants from between the steps, instead. That, I say, does not matter in the least ; but it would matter if I let him see how much I minded, after three years of watering and coaxing to get that red aubretia to live happily with its roots squeezed into such tiny cracks ; and he must not be allowed to observe the tear which falls on that delicate rose heuchera, and the red-brown sempervivum which had been so carefully arranged against the grey stone background in order to gratify the lust of an artistic eye.

“ Very kind of you, indeed ! and doesn't it look nice and tidy now ! ” is hard to say, when I simply cannot imagine what ever made him think of doing it—why he did not *see* how lovely the little plants looked growing there ! But it does matter to say it sweetly and sincerely. And evidently he has his point of view, and prefers garden steps quite bare. So we just thank him, and find ourselves a few steps nearer Heaven instead.

When he looks young and rather idiotic, and as if nobody ever dreamt of caring for him, and as if he never could have had a mother, and says he'd like to do a bit of work to earn a penny, and I ask him if he could clear away the newly-mown grass on the lawn, and get him a wheelbarrow and rake, and show him just how to do it, and where to empty the barrow when it is full, it does not matter a bit if he goes off and weeds the seed-bed, pulling up every one of my baby snapdragons, lovely going-to-be-salmon-pink, shilling-a-pocket, Sutton's best snapdragons, that we had been longing for years to have, and had just managed to save up pennies enough to buy !



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"Thank you. How thoughtful of you! and doesn't the ground look clear now!" pleases him very much, and with double wages he is allowed to depart at once, feeling so satisfied and proud with the memory of a really happy afternoon in Mary's Meadow. Meanwhile, our Angel Guardians remove those withered seedlings to the Heavenly Garden that awaits us, and we learn that salmon-pink is not a colour Mother Mary feels the need of, just at present, here.

There have not been too many happy afternoons in this world for our gardener!

Once Armel found him wandering by the river on a Sunday afternoon in the last stage of poverty and despair, and easily persuaded him to exchange a watery grave for the milk of human kindness. That was our most satisfactory experience. He was a born gardener, with a real love of the thing, and an instinct for the best way of getting an effect. For ten days, all day long, he did good work for us, for a very small remuneration, all we could afford, and just enough to cover his bare expenses for a clean lodging, and the plainest food, whilst he awaited a letter that didn't come—a letter from a man who knew him and had promised him work.

However, in spite of the apparent perfidy of his last and only friend, he got quite interested in making our rose-garden, and cheered up wonderfully and seemed to forget his troubles. Then one day when the work was nearly finished I noticed that he seemed sad, silent. I wasn't quite sure if he was sad, but anyhow he was different, and I told Armel, who looked out a bag of

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'baccy to comfort him. "Poor old chap, it is because he doesn't get that letter," he said. Then, later in the day, the old man told me that he *had* heard, and it was for us he was feeling sorry, because he must go away to his friend that very evening and our rose-garden would have to be left unfinished. In our delight at luck having turned his way at last (the friend had not really been unfaithful, but the letter had been misdirected and delayed), we all agreed that it would be better not to move the roses till November. The weather was now quite hot and dry, the place was beautifully laid out, and it would be just as well to wait for further developments until his job was over, and he could return to us during an otherwise slack time in the Autumn.

"Eighteen shillings a week to begin with, rising to thirty when it comes to bushelling, is not to be despised," said he. "I expect you don't know very much about hops?" We knew absolutely nothing. And it turned out that he knew everything. His manner completely changed; he was himself again, Legion no longer, and under these altered circumstances it seemed no indiscretion to ask his name. He was Benton of Burley, he said, and his father was "the man who cured the elephant. I expect you've heard of him." We did not say we hadn't! "And when the elephant came back, after seven years, it recognized my father on the doorstep of the chemist's shop, and picked him up and carried him all round the town."

And this was the man to whom for days past we had been tendering bowls of broth and broken bread; bags

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of tobacco which had gone rather dry, and pairs of trousers—so that his old ones might find leisure to be patched! A man who remembered his father being carried in triumph all round his native town! And he was returning to the very work at which he was considered an adept, in the neighbourhood that knew and respected his family.

"That's the son of the man who cured the elephant," people would whisper as he passed along the street. The letter had been long delayed, because of that mistake in the address; but the world appeared a very different place to-day from what it did ten days ago, when Armel found the man whose name he thought was Legion gazing disconsolately into our river's deepest pool. No wonder it was for *us* he now felt sad!

Another man grew sorrowful and left us for a still more beautiful reason. The weather proved impossible for gardening, and knowing how poor we were, he could not bear to take our money for nothing, so feigned an impending engagement in another county, by way of executing a graceful exit.

From all of which you will gather that our gardener either comes or he doesn't come, according to circumstances; and when he comes the garden gets on, and when he doesn't come it doesn't. It may often look untidy to the passer-by, who (if he or she knows us fairly well) ventures to ask why such and such a job does not get finished? Because our gardener has not yet returned, is the reply.

And if anyone objects to the front lawn having been

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mown with a scythe and all the half-moon marks too clearly showing, we just say cheerily, "the fairies have been dancing there!" Our gardener was tired after his long day's tramp and hurried to get the grass cut before night-fall. "Rather uneven! a bad bit of mowing!" critical friends may possibly observe; but that is of no consequence. It gives me an opportunity for making my little speech. And they cannot fail to be glad to learn about our fairies!

Amongst the other things that do not matter we reckon gratitude—that goes without saying—such an ingredient must never be expected in a man called Legion; but although unlooked for, we have had it shown to us again and again.

Once, I remember, he came back late on a summer evening, and there was rapid digging whilst a tired wife sat patiently, with failing sight, under our oak tree on "blind Dara's bench." That man worked on, hot and exhausted as he was after his long day's journey, with desperate vigour to get the "couchy-grass" all out of Betty's border by the swing. I quite forget now what it was that she or I had done to make him wish to express his gratitude in terms of earth and spade—the only language we both understood; but if ever a well-prepared flower-bed said "Thank you," that one did, when our gardener led away his dim-eyed wife that night.

Sometimes, instead of returning himself, our gardener sends his brother back; and it may be he is able to work, and a piece of rolling gets on nicely for awhile,

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or it may be that he is laid up at the lodging-house with a bad foot, blood-poisoning from a neglected cut, and can only manage to crawl as far as our porch for meals, and rest on a garden bench, reading an illustrated paper.

Sometimes the hours get taken up with conversation and correspondence, and in talking of his relations, who might possibly help him, and in writing his letters for him we are especially struck by the moderation of his tone and the thoughtfulness of his enquiries. The stamping is of necessity a royal matter; our gardener, like the King, uses no stamps; and his appreciation of a kindness is shown royally too. We find it rather fun when generous-hearted tramps are working for us to play at going one better in kindnesses and gratitude, offering up our little unnecessary attentions for our own wandering brothers. For instance, Armel gives him an early morning cup of tea directly he arrives, and he goes straight off into our meadow to pick up firewood, whilst he is waiting to be shown what work to do. I give him two sausages for his dinner, and go out again with greens and fruit and a mug of ginger wine, and he hurries over the unexpectedly delicious meal, and tidies up the tool-shed for us in his dinner-hour.

With Legion for a gardener the tool-shed is apt to get extraordinarily untidy. Some workmen are always leaving their work to go and hunt about for a different kind of tool, whilst Armel's idea is that the tool-shed ought to be kept exclusively for us to go and gnash our teeth in! And talking of tools reminds me that when

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I decided to train my soul I took the senses as my garden tools, having been immensely struck by hearing that the senses should be used as tools with which to form the character of the soul. The worst gnash we ever had was when two little girls had been sent into the meadow with paper bags to collect thistle seed, so that we might burn it, and they emptied it out on the rubbish heap (without waiting to ask if that was what we desired), and it blew all over the kitchen garden! They felt so proud of themselves for having collected such quantities that we could not scold them.

With a gardener 'like Legion one quickly discovers the things that really will flourish. We have never purchased plants, since our one rich burst at the King's Acre Nursery, when we quite lost our heads and brought away *everything*—from a tiny Himalayan Grisebachii, a really lovely little gem, for half-a-crown, which died, to a glorious large white broom, an accidental seedling in the same pot, which still lives on, providing the statue of Our Lady, each May, with tender, delicate sprays as a background to a more solid decoration of white and blue.

After all is said and done, we have not much to complain about in the result. Behold these rosemary bushes in flower for many months at a time! and these lavender hedges in wide, thick, solid masses, with no ragged spaces suggestive of a failure here and there! Behold these lakes of blue perennial cornflowers set in a sea of silvery leaves! that is the only effective way to grow them—in wide spaces. A bank of yellow primroses and

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blue lungwort, intermingled with white arabis, delights us in the early weeks of Spring ; a fairy-land of white campanula, red bergamot, and blue delphinium, follows later on. Here a great blaze of many coloured sweet williams brought tears to an old woman's eyes—a country woman, destined to spend her remaining years in a town. Town folk and country folk alike exclaim that from one root of clematis montana so many vanilla-scented flowers can spring, outlining and festooning our verandah like a trimming of some exquisite, deep embroidery twenty yards in length.

Its only rival in our affections is the wine-berry arch, beloved not only for its delicious fruit, coming at a time when raspberries are over and blackberries have not yet begun ; but for the beauty of those bronze-red stems of last year's growth, and for the wine-coloured transparency of its young shoots, through which the sunlight dances—innumerable sprays, rivalling the glory of pink clouds that follow sunset, even outshining rosy-fingered dawn.

Sight, rather than taste, is gratified in a garden such as ours, but we call it profitable market-gardening because our clients never fail—the demand is invariably equal to the supply. Perhaps the knowledge that our bill is to be paid in Heaven may account for this, though I must say one poor woman, who sends regularly for flowers for her baby's grave, charges her little son to offer two pence as a matter of form. White flowers, snowdrops, double arabis, white perennial cornflower, sweet rockets, pinks, chrysanthemums, are always in

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request for funerals galore, and graves insatiable. Tea-parties, especially a bride's first tea-party, require something very choice. Weddings, with which we can trace no connection, weddings in other neighbourhoods, demand a large supply of decorative blossoms. Hospitals want cardboard boxes full, London Hospitals where some sick child remembers having once been brought to tea in our Mary's Meadow tent. Mary's flowers travel from her meadow far and wide, and sometimes, rarely, a petal seems to fall from Heaven—a lovely message of gratitude reaches us from some total stranger—showing where it was the blossoms really went.

So I call it very profitable market-gardening, even without the chink of earthly coin. Each morning we gather large bunches of flowers for somebody, and place them ready in jars of water before our picture of the Holy Face. We don't know who they are for; *He* knows: and so does the first person who comes knocking at our door.

I thought of this plan of getting ready for an unknown guest one day when I was watching a gracious figure in a refreshment-room, at a big railway station, spreading cloths on tables, setting places, and arranging flower-vases, without ever asking, or even thinking, who would be benefited thereby. She looked, to me, like the Hand-maid of the Lord in her gentle, thoughtful, selfless, unquestioning service.

Like her, our garden never knows, from hour to hour, who its visitor may be. Once on my return from Mass I found a very young calf walking up and down on



## THE GARDEN OF MY SOUL

some little plants which I had most carefully set out in a long flower-border only the day before. A man who was driving a lot of cattle along our lane had told Armel that this particular little calf was very ill, and must be left behind. It would not eat anything or do any harm, he said; it just needed rest. Our garden seemed to suit it so well, that it soon made a rapid recovery, and was able to walk up and down my flower-border for several hours, looking for its mother. When eventually the man returned with a cart to fetch it away we were glad to be able to say we believed it was *much* better.

\* \* \* \* \*

But if you ask me whether we really always feel like this, I must confess we don't, and I think you will understand that though we *don't*, we always *wish we did*.



# THE SATURDAY CHILDREN





## IX

### THE SATURDAY CHILDREN

WITH regard to my kind of Sunday School, one of my brothers used to remark at Elton thirty years ago that it might happen equally well on any other day, and be called by any other name ; so now it takes place in our tent, on Saturdays.

It begins with cups of milk, and slices of bread and butter and currant buns, eaten picnic fashion, all sitting on the grass ; and it ends with posies of sweet william, rosemary, lavender, lemon-scented balm, and old clove carnations. Sometimes towards the middle of it there is the singing of hymns, and there are always coloured Bible picture books—Betty sees to that.

About twenty or thirty children come, and the tent only holds twelve—comfortably. *They* don't at all object to being squashed, but we do ! So we have had invitation tickets printed with open spaces for the name and date and time ; and there is a strict rule that no child is to be admitted to a Saturday-party without a ticket. But you must not imagine that this deters them. Not a bit of it ! They bring "Young Alfred," because "Young Alfred cried to come along" ; and they carry

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little Dossie, sucking her "nummy," and say "It doesn't matter bringing Dossie, because she is too young to eat anything"; and they know I shan't mind having Rosie Matthews, because her mother is ill; and they think we'll like poor Katie Tipton, because she's lame and walks with a crutch; and Gerty Collier is staying with the Ridlers, and goes back home to London on Monday, and she wanted to come because she didn't even know what a tent-party was.

So in this way the numbers never run short!

My contribution is to talk to the children about the love of God, believing that all children should be devoted to His service, and placed in the way of salvation. I tell them stories of the Judgment Day, how at the moment of death the veils will fall from their eyes, and they will see Our dear Lord face to face; how all the little kind actions they have done here will be shown them, written down in large letters by an angel in an everlasting book; how Our Lord will reward them a hundred-fold for every tiny act of love, and how delighted they will be when they see Him stretching out His Arms to them and telling them to come and be happy with Him in Heaven for ever and ever.

The children are getting to think of death as the beautiful open gate it really is, and of life as just a chance of being kind. I get them to tell me of any kind actions they have noticed during the week, or of kind deeds which they have been fortunate enough to have an opportunity of doing for Our Saviour's sake. One little girl, the other day, who was very shy, told us how her

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younger sister had lost a ball and cried, and how she had gone to look for it for her ; but she was afraid that she had not remembered that she was doing it to please God ! However, as she had found the ball she hoped her angel would have made a note of it. We said we felt quite sure that would be all right, handing her another and a larger bun.

Nowadays we accent all our teaching about the love of God with happiness and something good to eat, that in the future all good things and happiness may put them in mind of God. I believe so much in the force of association. I have, in fact, got a complete system of education ready, but the difficulty with such material is quite to know where to begin.

I know what I want ; but I don't know how to get it. So marches, and flags, and flowers, and garden games seem the best way of creating an atmosphere in which hereafter the desirable qualities can thrive. Truth, we especially aim at, but as yet their frequent "birthdays," necessitating gifts on our part, force me to fear lest veracity is not at present the Saturday Children's strongest point.

The absence of a sense of honour used to run a good second to it. "Tuppenny" would promise faithfully to weed for a fortnight if she could have a pair of strong boots in advance ; but, the boots once purchased, the weeding was forgotten, until "me Mother wants a blouse," or "me little sister wants an old frock of Miss Betty's," brought her again to our door. All children have their funny little ways. "Tuppenny" is perhaps

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my favourite, because of her evident improvement. When we first had the pleasure of making her acquaintance she was an inveterate beggar, a bearer of dirty, pencilled notes. She will now work for an hour or two in the garden without begging for anything! And the reason is that the previous day I ask her, very sweetly, to find out if there is any little thing her mother would like, and to let me know what it is *just before she goes*. If she doesn't ask until the moment of departure she gets it.

Although, from a horticultural point of view, children in a garden are not much use, I like to see them marching round the Perfect Paths, carrying banners, and foxgloves, and wearing white veils, and singing "Daily, daily," and "Mother of Christ."

When Betty gardened as a tiny child, and soon got tired, she used to throw her weeding knife away into the bushes, and in the Autumn I found one after another, when I was clearing up the herbaceous borders or the shrubberies—rusty and useless. Nowadays she only lays them down, and forgets where; so in that way there are not quite so many lost.

And the question is not whether the child does the garden any good, but whether contact with the garden will benefit the child. Trusting little ones to gather posies teaches them a certain regard for flowers, and the difference between grass and paths and edges; that you must pick things tenderly, and not snatch, and tear them up by the roots.

I had a little Garden-Maid long years ago, "the



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Honestest Root-gatherer," who went about the Meadows of my Earthly Paradise, planting things in faith and love. She tells me she has never forgotten an allegory about daffodils which I made up for her when the beautiful game came to an end, and "the dear Honourable Majesty" was obliged to go away. Six little "Flower Stories" there were, one for each Garden-Maid. That was my first printed book, written on my knees. I wanted the children to possess something of me—my best—after I had gone.

Whenever in after life she had occasion to take flowers to a sick child that story of the daffodils recurred to her mind, the Root-gatherer said. It is a rarely faithful mind!

Once, when she was a child, ill in bed, I had gone to visit her, and had exclaimed, "How lovely to see the sunset from your bedroom window! You *are* a lucky child!" and she marvelled at the young lady from the Hall thinking about sunsets. Afterwards, in service, she lived with a lady who also loved sunsets. "Another lady with a beautiful mind," she says, considering herself fortunate in having known two.

There is no such thing as "a chance remark." Your tiny thread, although you may never guess it, is working in to form a part of that beautiful design which the Creator of the universe arranges from above. What wonders were achieved by Lady A——'s few words condemning the contents of a library box as "rubbish!" "I won't let my daughters fill their minds with *that*," she said. The books were returned, and the reason sank

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deep into the soul of my Honest Root-gatherer. She gave up her penny novelettes and took to buying Truth Society pamphlets at the door of the Catholic Church, instead. When the mistress moved to London the maid found her way to Westminster Cathedral, and went in *to pray for me*. She used to watch the building of that great edifice with loving interest, thinking how much it would have interested her "dear Honourable Majesty." Loyalty could go no farther, and was rewarded by the Grace she so thoroughly deserved. I hope she will not mind my telling you about her.

Country children, when one is the squire's daughter, are easier to manage than slum children when one is poor, and hard-working, living in a cottage oneself. The contrast to their minds is not so marked; and little do they dream that the sacrifice has been made for their sake. I was resolved to get *nearer* to the poor, and to set forth in my own person the dignity of Labour and the possibility of leading a beautiful, simple life, without what are generally known as "private means."

With this in view I tried to interest the slum children in the making of inexpensive soups and salads, but during my culinary disquisitions their attention wandered. Long sprays of "sweethearts" interested them far more than the potential value of French sorrel; and I had to promise not to weed away the goose-grass from the herb-bed, because the children did so much like to have it clinging to them.

Children see what they are taught to see; so we gradually taught them to count the twenty-seven

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Madonna lilies on their way to say "Hail, Marys," at the Bower; to watch the dozens of white butterflies, which hovered over a lavender hedge twelve yards long and two yards wide; to admire the endless clusters of pink roses, all growing from one stem; a rose which cost us fourpence four years ago, and now has not only covered the whole roof of the Bower, but, turning towards the sun, has wandered all over the shrubbery to the south, shining through the brown leaves of a copper beech, festooning a white lilac bush, mingling with a young Judas tree, twining in and out of the branches of a Spanish yellow broom; and then, as if to strengthen itself for new adventures, taking root at the foot of a purple plum, before beginning again to grow and blossom and explore for God's Glory and their ultimate delight.

"How do you make things grow like that?" people sometimes ask, and we frankly admit we don't—the angels do it.

I love to send the children laden with heaps of beauty to the Church, and of course they always go laden home. *That* is so much a matter of course that my attempted lessons in gratitude fall rather flat. "What do you say?" I once asked as I filled a small child's arms with such a heap of roses that I felt sure her little heart must overflow with joy. "I didn't say anything," she answered stolidly, and I felt admonished for my presumption.

Our meadow is literally *mown* twice a year or oftener (which is, I believe, the exact meaning of "after-math")—mown for the poor; large bunches cut with a large knife. A real meadow ought to be level ground, they

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say ; ours is partly low and partly very high ; the latter, Armel declares, signifies the extremely high level on which we try to live. It used to be just called Primrose Bank—a descriptive name until the primroses all got taken away. But it isn't what you *have* that makes you rich, it is how you use it. We are always trying, by means of the produce of our garden, to give the children beautiful new interests to shift on their former ugly thoughts. We try to get them to imagine a nice home, and to welcome the air of Heaven. My Mother taught me to love sweet, clean, fresh air, and to breathe deep and literally drink it in, on the Welsh Mountains long ago.

With regard to the children's mothers, the only way to love them is not to read the local papers. When, in passing, I admire some woman standing at her door with a sweet, sad face, I do not want to know that last Saturday she was fined eight shillings for using abusive language to her next-door neighbour. Sometimes, I wonder what she is thinking of—looking so soulful. "Her new epithets," Armel once cynically suggested ! Those who read papers have to think of the mothers occasionally as in the last stage of intoxication, rolling on the floor, tearing each other's hair out. "Charlotte again !" is the heading of many a column, suggesting arms akimbo, letting her husband have it. "Charlotte again !" as I point her out to Betty, is the woman who loves tiny little children, and who goes out of her way continually to comfort some baby thing that has tumbled into trouble.

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A complete knowledge of the children's home-life might perhaps give us the clue to their preference for the atmosphere of Mary's Meadow. It is certainly different here. But as we don't study the local news we are able to think of the women as, on occasion, we see them beautifully patient, unselfish, brave. As a rule I like to believe that the children come to us to continue what they have begun to learn at home: possessing a garden of sorts, they are interested in gardens, and they find ours is bigger; and doubtless it is their mother's tasteful decoration of the tea-table, when Father is expected home, which prompts the children to ask us for still larger supplies of flowers. Then their pet kitten has led them far along the path of kindness to animals on which we lay such stress. We teach it thus: firstly, not to hurt live things; secondly, to love them. There is the power to destroy, and the greater power to tame. It is natural to be interested, natural *to want to get it*, and it can be done; either *without its life, against its will, with fear*; or *with its life, of its own accord, with love*. Explained in this way, of course, the children see at once that there is no comparison between the two methods. They take a great delight in Betty's four tame doves, which are allowed to fly where they please all day and return at nightfall to their shed, with the door tight shut to keep them safely from stray cats. Doves bow and coo so sweetly, and descend upon one from on high so beautifully, that we are ever kept in mind of the Holy Spirit.

With regard to wild birds, there are many nests in the

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Meadow, into which no inquisitive fingers are allowed to pry. "That is the mother-bird's little secret," I say. "She thinks you don't know that she has got any eggs in the laurel bush. She doesn't want anybody to guess it for the world!" I cannot truthfully state that in this respect we have met with no accidents.

It is disappointing when the very children who came to tea and behaved so beautifully last week, crowd round the outer door, hang on the orchard gate and shake it, scramble up the bank, throw stones, push through the hedge, and boo and jeer and shout at the twelve who are having tea to-day.

When rude boys indulge in cat-calls, I nearly cry. I cannot bear to think of their remorse when they are old enough to understand.

And how to deal with them is a difficult problem. Sometimes I say: "I believe you are all such nice good children, *do* let Mr. O'Connor *see* that you are." It makes me miserable to find hedges broken, wire cut, gaps re-opened and the mending thrown in the road, and boys in the glen stealing moorhen's eggs.

One day I felt quite wretched about it all. It seemed as if my beautiful theories of how to live were an utter failure, when a knock came at the door, and an old woman asked me for five shillings to pay her back rent. It was the first time in her life that she had got behindhand, she said, and she had lived in the same cottage for forty-two years. Of course I wanted to help her, but there wasn't a penny in the house, so I asked if she would mind waiting for the afternoon post *in case* some money might

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come in a letter, as it often has done at an opportune moment. She sat down and waited ; the post was late ; but when at length it arrived there was a five shilling postal order from a stranger, for one of my books ; and I felt that God did love me after all, and allowed me to love Him.

A delightful old woman remarked to me once, " Please, ma'am, why do you try to be a Christian ? Nobody else does." I couldn't help laughing ! Well, anyhow, we *have* set out to be Christians—and it is a long, long way to Heaven. Our journey thither might, perhaps, be called " The Adventures of a Family of Christians in the Twentieth Century ! "

\* \* \* \* \*

Having children to tea in Mary's Meadow on Saturdays was a means of getting them to kneel with me before the Blessed Sacrament on Sundays.

I loved to take them to Benediction, knowing Our Lord would be delighted, and expecting everyone else to be the same. " For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Dirt, rags, and fidgety behaviour, however, affect some people differently. It was a shock to me to find that my special contingent at the evening service was not welcome ! For my part, I am ready to believe they who offer free pasturage to the least of the Lord's creatures are no less pleasing to their Creator than those rich ladies who trim their hats with the feathers of dead birds ; and to my nostrils the very strong bought perfume of the one is no less odious than " the smell

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of the poor"; if anything, I dislike bought odours most—they *could* help it! The case resolved itself into the choice of the smell of fusty furs or fusty garments—children's rags and tatters, or the ladies' silly clothes hanging in unmeaning, disjointed oddments. The children fidgeted and talked and scratched; the fashionable ladies whispered and rattled their purses, rosaries and chains. It seemed all one to me; but the congregation took another view.

When I heard it I lost my temper, and was sorry afterwards. For the success of any charitable enterprise one's mind must be at one with the mind of the Priest. I had so very much wanted Ludlow to be blessed; but evidently the time had not yet come; and God had no need of my assistance in the matter. All the children of this neighbourhood will, I know, be blessed abundantly *some* day.

Without Benediction the tent-parties lost their meaning. Suppose we dug a big hole—the grave of my hopes—and put in it the tent, the tickets, the hymn books, and the catechism, and all the veils and flags, and suppose we laid a great stone on top and carved: "There are no disappointments to one whose will is buried in the Will of God." Yet it lies heavy.

Sometimes, however, for a moment the stone seems rolled away, when two little children come of their own accord with a posy of wild flowers for the Bower vases, and kneel and say a prayer.

It doesn't matter if they leave "the chicky-gate" open and the wild rabbits come and burrow in the garden.



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We had three nests this spring—one in the lavender hedge just under the Mary-Room window. Betty delights in seeing rabbits wash their faces, and she now keeps a trough of bran for them in front of Our Lady's Statue.

I am sure *she* loves to see Minnie's dirty nose—like a little black dog, and to hear Lotty's cough—Lotty is always making a noise as if something caught in her throat. They simply don't know *what* to do with themselves on a nice Spring day, and our Bower forms a delightful objective for daisy chains or quickly-picked, tight-held bunches of celandine that would otherwise get thrown away.

And it is indeed consoling to see the wearers of those curious, shapeless garments kneeling when they have finished their floral decorations—kneeling and saying the sweet names of Jesus and Mary.



# THE ART OF TACKING





## X

### THE ART OF TACKING

**T**HICKLY the acorns fell last Autumn, and the horses feasted on them greedily, and one died, in consequence of which our tenant found himself unable to pay his rent. This year we thought it wiser *not* to let the meadow. A friend of some experience said that taking horses in to tack would suit our purpose better, and we determined to act upon his advice. During such a wet Summer the grass had grown rampaciously, and we wanted it to be eaten down before the falling of the leaves ; so when a poor old neighbour sent his wife to tell us that their keep was running short, we willingly agreed to take their pony for a while.

They understood that we were going to cut the bracken on the bank ; he had enough fern for his own use, the man said, and ours would be no good at all to him. Then, having amiably fallen in with our requirements, he threw out a little suggestion on his own account : a friend's pony was willing to run with his for company ; and before we had time either to consent or decline, he hastened to assure us that *he* would sign our agreement and hold himself responsible for the whole sum. If it was rather an insignificant amount, the appeal in the

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old woman's eyes, and the pathos of her worn and wrinkled hands, may have accounted for that. Also we liked to see the ponies in the field, and congratulated ourselves upon the ease with which we were carrying out our plan.

Not till we cut the fern did the man get huffy. He had not understood that we meant to keep it, he said ; there was a misunderstanding somewhere ; he fully intended to make us an offer, and cut it all himself. We must either let him have it now, or he would take his animals away at once. The dear old wife, reluctantly, delivered this ultimatum. And as the latter course appeared to us the more consistent with truth and honesty, the ponies were relinquished. His own grass had recovered with the six weeks' rest ; his friend had settled up with him for the use of ours ; and he blusteringly refused to give me a single farthing, because he had not kept his animals in the meadow during the full time mentioned in the agreement !

I should never have given the old fellow credit for such diplomacy. He had proved himself wiser in his generation than any child of light I could ever hope to meet ; I was really *enchanted*, for though, of course, one could not congratulate oneself upon the purely financial aspect of a matter of this kind, I felt proud of being acquainted with a man who was such a wonderful adept in his own line. However, the end of the story is rather humiliating ; he bows to Armel still, but he won't look at me. He can't bear having any dealings with women, he says.

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After this enlightening episode we decided that for the future we must be paid in advance. One profits by experience. Our rule was now to be two shillings a week per horse if paid beforehand ; but at the rate of sixpence a night if seven days should elapse without a settlement. To ask very little *and get it* would pay us better in the long run.

As soon as our new scheme was generally known, a dark, handsome boy came with two shillings and a quiet old pony, and we felt that we were fairly started now upon a satisfactory business footing. A second pony of "Sister's" arriving shortly afterwards, without a preliminary florin, failed to arouse our suspicions ; sympathy for "Sister" during an illness, in a travelling caravan many years ago, seemed to have given her a claim upon my generosity. She was coming to see me herself, the nice boy said, and she would tell me all about it. So I admired her pony, and awaited the pleasure of her visit.

"Father's" horse came next, without a "with your leave," or "by your leave" ; but though we felt a little surprised at this we did not get seriously annoyed until the morning, when we discovered that an enormous black cart mare had been turned into our orchard late at night. She was standing stock still when we found her, drawing up one hind leg at intervals, and seeming to have the greatest difficulty in putting it down again. We thought she must be suffering from rheumatism, and felt sorry for her—until she moved.

When the spirit of adventure set her in motion she

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either backed into one of the young lime trees of our future avenue, and bent it to the ground, or she ate a top branch of a treasured apple tree—four years' growth disappearing at a mouthful. Had it not been for the size of her teeth, and the old proverb about a gift horse, we might have been tempted to look for it! What with her huge weight and her huge appetite, we calculated that she was doing about two shilling's worth of damage every quarter of an hour. We got more and more annoyed, driving her off, moving her on, or gazing helplessly and feeling very small. She was so enormous that she made our orchard look ridiculous, and we began to fear that if she stayed much longer our hope for the future would have become a thing of the past.

At length her owner arrived, most courteous, but quite unabashed. He was going to give us sixpence a night for her keep, he said; but he quite agreed that she was too large for a young orchard, and he sympathized profoundly with our distress over the damage to our fruit trees. Glibly and vaguely he promised compensation as he led his rampant horse out into the meadow. He had not liked to disturb us when he put her in last night, he explained, and he thought she wouldn't move a step; she had just come seventeen miles, and was a bit knocked up after the journey; in fact, he'd counted on her standing still.

She stood still in the meadow, right enough, with one leg cocked up, looking at us reproachfully; but we were so afraid of saying something uncharitable, and so glad to be relieved of our black elephant, that we hastened



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back to literary work indoors, and did not find out till the afternoon that she was in the orchard again. The polite young man had brought her straight back directly the front door was shut behind us because, as he afterwards explained, she was so big and clumsy, he feared lest she might tumble into the river.

Personally, I couldn't help thinking that the river would have been a very suitable place for her; her demand for water was extraordinary; in fact, I had to resign myself and a bucket to her service for the remainder of the day. Sometimes it is hard work trying to be a Christian! I made a desperate attempt, handing over "my cloak also" in the shape of a scarlet nonpareil. When my guest had eaten the top off, and broken the small stem in half, she looked at me solemnly and yawned.

So things went on. Every day, for every evil, the owner offered a speedy remedy, but we noticed that the crowning evil always came last.

Not till some time afterwards did I learn that this dark horse had been spending many days and nights in desultory wandering, having explored most of the back-yards and cabbage gardens of the neighbourhood with qualified success. Some people turned her out at once, some sent for the police, and some resigned themselves to the inevitable, hoping for compensation. One brave old laundress, hearing a noise in the night, went down to investigate the cause, and found the great black monster making unearthly noises over the soft-water butt.

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It would really be a benefit to society at large, we felt, for us to localize this nightmare. And the accommodation would only be required temporarily, the young man said, as she was really on her way to Manchester. Poor Manchester ! little did its inhabitants guess what was in store for them. I picture her now, the very embodiment of a disordered imagination, eating their fruit trees, backing into their doorways, and gurgling over their water-butts.

However, before we finally parted with her, yet another of that equine crew found its way, uninvited but undeterred, into our peaceful enclosure. That made five ! and one and all completely mystified us. They appeared to belong to various members of the same family, or *not* the same family, according to circumstances ; but never to that particular member of the party to whom we were making our complaint. They were all such very near relations when a new horse was put in, that we were told it really did not matter which we considered it belonged to ; but, when a difficulty arose over the promised payment, they suddenly developed different names, and were no relation to each other, and we discovered that the horse we were complaining about had just changed hands, and its present owner, who ought to pay for its keep, had "gone off" somewhere, and was not expected back till Saturday.

They treated us with extreme politeness, being all past-masters of the art of courtesy ; but they also understood the art of tacking. They invariably agreed with all we said, and each one separately condemned the

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conduct of the others ; they promised us redress for all our wrongs, and liberal compensation ; but for the moment they were always, unfortunately, short of change, and would have to wait "to bring it down to-morrow evening."

When we adjured the old father to *insist* upon his sons either paying for their horses' keep, or removing them altogether, he looked puzzled and vague ; said sadly, "They are no sons of mine," and remarked on the wonderful growth of our poplar trees. He never produced a penny on his own account, though at one time or another he was supposed to be the owner of at least two of the horses. Neither did "Sister" ever put in an appearance ; so I was forced to content myself with an affectionate remembrance of her beauty. They were all beautiful. We admired the old father, as an actor, immensely. He felt, at last, so shocked at the inherited behaviour of his sons that he washed his hands of the whole matter ; and when we met him in the town he turned and walked severely away, lest even the sight of us might bring him back to a commercial (if honest) train of thought.

What was most lovely was the friendly confidence of the youngest boy. He always began, "Now see, lady, it isn't likely we'd treat you unfairly, is it?" which, following on the heels of five unpaid-for horses, taxed my powers of polite rejoinder to the utmost limit.

"I am sure that you intend to behave most honourably," I said ; but I really was surprised when the debt had mounted up to thirteen and six, and I had managed

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with immense difficulty to make out an intelligible bill (giving the details as to which horse arrived, which day, and to whom it belonged, and when it was taken away, and when it came back again); yes, I really was surprised at his whispering, in his most persuasive manner, "Don't be hard on me, lady. Call it four and sixpence," as he laid down three shillings.

"But even if I *did* call it four and sixpence, why should you give me three shillings?" I asked, bewildered with vague recollections of a horse-dealing conversation that I had overheard at Bron Fair years ago. "What is the price of the pony, governor?" "Twelve pounds." "You ask me ten, and I'll offer you eight."

"See, lady, I'm going to bring the one and six this evening. I haven't any change with me now," was his ingenuous reply.

We began to wonder if even George Borrow would have been able to master the situation.

Eventually a local fair necessitated the presence of the whole troupe, and during their temporary absence we put a padlock on the gate, and mended up our fencing with barbed wire. Towards evening, when the party pressed again around the entrance, we still retained our key.

It is not easy to practise the eternal virtues when dealing with the servants of time. We suddenly realised the true inwardness of a grille; there must be something between idealists and the outer world. The grille stands as a symbol of the fact, not so much that the inmates of the convent are cut off from the pleasures

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of life, as that they are protected from the materialists' rapacity.

Our grille had two bars broken during the coal strike, when firewood was at a premium ; but though its supports are rickety, and it hangs rather out of the perpendicular, there it is, at all events, with its iron hinges on the one side, and its locked chain on the other, affording us some measure of security against the animals that would fain come in to tack.

On being courteously surrounded, in the town, and begged, in pity for the hungry horses, to remove the padlock, Armel considered that the moment had arrived for explaining the situation from our point of view.

Would he allow the horses to come back for just one night? No. Would he consent if they promised to pay double for any damage? No. Would he not take just two of the quietest little ponies that did not do any harm? No, no, no, no. He did not trust himself to look at the polite young men, or at the handsome, pleading women, or at the face of that nice boy with the beguiling smile, who professed such faith in his kind heart. He kept his thoughts fixed on the fact that he must answer "No"; and when at length they ceased their importunities he gave them a little of what was in his mind.

"I am fond of study of every kind," he said, "and I must take this opportunity of thanking you for the lessons you have given me in the Art of Tacking. It is undoubtedly a very pretty science, but not altogether in my line. I understand horses, but I should never

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understand horse dealing. It is evidently not the simple matter that I imagined it to be, and I am unequal to it. You are used to transacting business with people who do their best to get the better of each other, but I am not used to it. I have never done it, or done anybody, and I don't want to. But because I have no desire to cheat, you must not suppose that I do not mind being cheated ; and because I do not resent an injury, it does not follow that I did not notice it. Good afternoon."

Then they understood.

In any great work, I believe, it is an axiom that one must try and fail, and then try and succeed. Whether our work is great or not, it is not for me to say ; but, at all events, we find it satisfactory to realize that we have got half-way.

# THE INVISIBLE GRILLE







## XI

### THE INVISIBLE GRILLE

IT has been frequently remarked that Catholic families are extremely difficult to know. "They are kind, they are generous, they are particularly hospitable when you go to see them, but they don't ask you to come; and, whilst they are really interested in what you tell them of your own affairs, they, deliberately, never mention anything which concerns themselves." The Grille is none the less apparent for being invisible.

Sometimes I think Armel would be glad if our own grille *were* visible; although in dealing with a certain class of person, nothing is of any use. For instance, a notice-board, requesting passers-by to respect his privacy in the Glen, catches my eye from every point (and incidentally grieves me very much), yet a young man to whom we had once given work, when he returned to this neighbourhood with a friend for a bit of a holiday, had no scruple about lighting a fire, washing his clothes, cooking his dinner and leaving a litter of paper and rags just where Armel was going to sit and write a poem!

"Did you not see the notice-board?" he asked, surprised.

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"No, I never saw it," replied the young man, quite in good faith. And his friend declared he never saw it either. He had no notion it was private ground! The size of the notice-board is about three feet by two, with letters several inches high, and the men were sitting within a dozen yards of it. That shows, I think, that visible, material barriers to the world's ingress are worthless.

The Holy Man of Tours thought of a lovely plan: he kept a light always burning before his picture of the Holy Face, and when his visitors demanded what it meant, he would reply very sweetly, "It means that when you have concluded the business for which you came, you must go or talk of God." In our Martha-Room we keep a light burning before the picture of the Holy Face, which you gave Armel, and once or twice when conversation has drifted into undesirable channels, I have tried to make Monsieur Leon Papin Dupont's remark—but it is a difficult thing to say!

During his first visit to Mary's Meadow Llewelyn was delighted with Armel's love of retirement, noticing how after breakfast he did not want to be spoken to, and would go away alone to have a smoke. "It's as much as my place is worth to disturb him," I had to say. And then his "den," at the top of the house, which no one is allowed to enter, and where nothing may ever be dusted or touched except by its owner—Armel goes up there and shuts the door; and when he has finished the work for which he went up he comes down again. My brother admired *that* very much.

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Robert Louis Stevenson, on the other hand, strongly disapproved of a man who must separate himself from his neighbours' habits in order to be happy. He went so far as to call him "a skulker," believing that such an one did not wish virtue to go out of him among his fellow-men, but retired into a corner to hoard it for himself. He was mistaken. That brave man who worked the Marconigram apparatus whilst the *Titanic* was going down proved for all time that he who serves humanity along invisible lines of communication is not "a skulker." Many of the world's heroes possess such delicate faculties that for their cultivation and operation solitude is a necessity.

You have heard it said "that everyone comes after death into his own society in which his spirit was whilst he lived in the world; for every man, as to his spirit, is conjoined with some society either of heaven or hell. The spirit is brought to this society by successive steps, and at length enters within it." It is done gently and simply by separating ourselves from all that is not God. Then the soul neither fears nor desires anything, the will being completely lost in that of God, which produces union.

Perhaps it is because they love *so much, so much*, that at times "the salt of the earth" are obliged to go apart; they long for others to take an interest in those beautiful, joy-giving things which alone they care for, and it is the world's utter failure to do so which really forms an insuperable barrier to all intercourse.

The Saints' very motion of love—prayer and sympathy

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for others—becomes so powerful and rapid as to prevent intrusion. In the world our circle is too crowded. If the ring is too closely packed, less energy will be externally manifested.

No one would deny that St. Francis of Assisi was devoted to the service of his fellow-men; but you remember his Woodland Chapel: "he set a hedge about the spot within which no secular person might set foot, so that no word other than that concerning spiritual things might be uttered there. Within that enclosure even the brethren might not speak save of God and their soul's welfare."

By remaining the greater part of each week within the walls of our cottage, and the hedges of the garden, our sphere of usefulness is not so limited as you might imagine.

We open the front door ourselves, and those who want us, come. "God my side: God your side: each of us an atom of Christ's Mystical Body," I say to myself as I open the door, trying to recognize the spirit alone, and to take no notice of the inferior, material vehicle in which His need of human sympathy is for the moment manifested. Tramps think there are great riches on the other side of that nail-studded door, because there is always *something* forthcoming. They little guess that it is *they* who are our treasures!

"Welcome birds, and beasts and men. One good deed and blessings ten" is not actually written up in the porch, and so some very short-sighted visitors are not able to read it. Neither can they read the avenue of approach: yews, evergreen and symbolizing death; limes, dying

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each Autumn and standing leafless through the winter months to represent the passing joys of this life. Conventional callers would probably first see Mrs. Ginger's pail on the front-door step! I am afraid we are really worse than the Severins—our steps are too often strewn with what the last recipients of our hospitality have discarded. Properly speaking, a grille should be a screen or grating of unfiled, pierced or hammered metal—ours is made of bones: partly supplied by ravenous beggars, and partly by the callers themselves, who are not yet in touch with our transcendental outlook. You find in Rome what you take there. Not that I mean to say unsympathetic visitors literally *bring* the bones—it must be admitted that although all hungry wanderers enjoy picking over the tasty remnants of a stock-pot, they don't all put their leavings back tidily on the plate;—but there is a sort of dry-bones attitude of mind which is very apt to blind people of that sort to everything else.

I was once foolish enough to call on some Catholics who had taken a large house in the neighbourhood for a few months. Though very smart, they appeared to be devout, and in a moment of enthusiasm I thought they might like to see our home. They didn't. The footman left cards; and I saw at once that they were perfectly right. Had they permitted themselves to be interested in our way of living they would have lost something of their smartness, and a sense of smartness once lost is, I believe, impossible to regain.

As a rule we don't pay calls upon our neighbours, and we don't want to be called on; we only ask to maintain

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our position in the circle of eternity—to know those people whom we can go on knowing in Heaven.

I have been told that the relations of a well-known idealist cut him when he sacrificed all his worldly prospects in order to lead a really noble life. It is an illuminating story, though I hope it isn't quite true. Most people with beautiful ideas of life are, at first, treated with suspicion by their near relations. Not until they meet with others who are struggling against long odds in the same direction, are they able to convince themselves that in spite of all appearances to the contrary they are not mad.

That is why it is such an immense advantage for an idealist to belong to the Catholic Church. One leans on the Church, one rests in the Church, the Faith of our Fathers provides the only suitable and satisfactory background for one's own idealism. Its dogmas never troubled me in the least, I found them very easily translated into everyday language—they are, in fact, in other words, just what we are all believing all the time.

Yet a dear friend, whose affectionate sympathy has followed me through many a philosophical transition, which would have been enough to shake off less devoted loyalty, can't help occasionally remarking that she wonders "how I slipped in!" We agree about everything, she says, yet they won't let her in. The explanation must be that if my ideas are sometimes expressed in incorrect terms through ignorance, or lack of early instruction, I qualify all my statements by saying that this is only what I *think*—what I *believe* is whatever the

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Catholic Church teaches on the subject. My friend calls this "being a Jesuit in disguise." I only wish I were! I have the greatest admiration for absolute submission to authority, implying, as it does, that one belongs to a whole body of which one is only a tiny part, a little ignorant atom of a perfect whole. And I would gladly bring all my books to be burned to-morrow if the destroying of my thoughts and ideas would help the world one-eighth of an inch nearer to Divine Truth, or if it were judged that any of my writings might keep one soul away from God. Whilst they blazed I would say cheerfully: "They were not needed." All my cherished ideas of love and beauty, and many, many more, far better written, are already in the possession of the Church. Sometimes, when reading St. Augustine, I feel that he said all that ever could be said, and that for me to attempt to write *anything* is a work of supererogation. I hope I shall give it up soon. To me as well as to my critics it seems unnecessary and egotistical. In any case, I couldn't write as I do *for print*, I only scribble about our little doings and thinkings for the dear friends who ask me for it, and say they like it.

"Princes and Washerwomen," as somebody remarked, "Cardinals, Poets, Musicians, Heroes, and Saints and Nuns, are our real friends." We can, in fact, hope for only such friends on earth—the spiritual *élite*. Such as these, when they come to see us intuitively understand that our porch is reserved for people in trouble; they neither see nor stumble over buckets and bundles of

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bones at the front door, they go round easily and naturally to the verandah entrance, finding and admiring Betty's little water-garden by the way. They pause, enraptured by the white broom's delicate sprays; they exclaim at the beauty of the rockery; the six varieties of aubretia, the unusually early white saxifrage, the chosen position of each red daisy peeping out from its surroundings like a gem well set. Real friends come up the garden steps, amidst lemon-thyme and crimson heuchera, and vivid green "sweep's brush," and they sit on easy chairs on the verandah with the Mary-Room door open to Armel's piano, and hear him play one of Schumann's Novelletten with a wonderful, difficult, galloping thud; and they feel and sympathize with the pace of a quiet life—recognizing the combination of intense spiritual activity and repose. Then perhaps after Mallinson's "Child, what sings the morning?" we all come in and drink a cup of good tea in the Martha-Room, and nobody minds having nothing but "Simple-life" biscuits to eat; knowing that it is because we have just given away all the bread to some poor person, and there is no chance of getting any more until to-morrow afternoon.

For such as these there is no grille.



# THE REAL FAIRY-LAND





## XII

### THE REAL FAIRY-LAND

THE other name for this paper is "The Betty Land." I must admit I did not think of it myself, although now the title, and that which it so charmingly expresses, both belong to me. It was a witty and delightful friend, who does not make more fun of my ideas than they deserve, who first remarked: "I always think of Mary's Meadow as 'The Betty Land'"; and when shortly afterwards, speaking of gardens, he asked if there was anything I wanted, anything that he could give me, in return for some rather rare primrose-coloured encrusted saxifrage, which I had just given to him, I asked for his *bon-mot* as the title for one of the papers which I was writing for you; and with his habitual generosity he said that it was henceforth mine, to use in any way I pleased.

Well, "The Betty Land" means Fairy-land, but it is the Fairy-land of God's wonderful, beautiful universe, the dwelling-place of Saints and Angels, the "vast Cathedral of the world"; a place of transcendental expectations and supernatural happenings; where marvels of faith and providential coincidences

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go side by side with the wonders of Nature and all manner of scientific revelations. It is enchanted ground, the little atoms dancing thereon with a perfect rhythm.

On the subject of fairies you will be amused to hear that Armel and I *very* nearly had a quarrel ; he wanted Betty to be brought up in fairy-land. Well and good, so did I, there I entirely agreed with him ; my own conception of a tiny child's ideal environment was just that ; but when one day he suddenly suggested that there should be *fairies* in her fairy-land, I was astounded ! Of course I resolutely put my foot down—that I would *not* allow. Betty's education was to be proof against all sudden shocks and abrupt terminations, at least so far as it was in my power to arrange matters. Now birds and trees and flowers may die in the Autumn, but in the Spring they all return again ; whilst fairies—dear, little, tender, glistening, gossamer creatures of our ignorant longing for pure joy—fairies must pass away when they are discovered not to be true ; and when once they have gone out of your life they never, never come back.

Of course, I was much more foolish and imaginative than most children, and my experience may not be much of a guide towards the right understanding of the average young mind ; yet I can't help believing I was not the only girl who built herself a fairy palace, and wept and was utterly inconsolable, when at fifteen or sixteen years of age she found it lying in ruins on the rock of common-sense. I was driving with my father at the time, and I shall never forget how bitterly I

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cried. He had broken the news to me rather suddenly, and at first he was angry and scolded me for giving way to feelings of such hopeless desolation ; then he grew tender, realizing that here was some hitherto unsuspected depth of whimsical vagary that he could never fathom, and he put his arm around me and kissed me, and I sobbed on his shoulder for the remaining two miles home.

Well, Betty isn't going to wake up some fine morning and discover that the whole idea of Mary's Meadow was a dream ! Our alchemy is to take the ordinary commonplace circumstances of everyday life, and change them by a happy way of thinking into significance and beauty. If I don't tell her fairy tales it is because I want her always to live in Fairy-land. An outdoor atmosphere of sentiment will accompany her through life. Marvels of Nature, scientifically studied, provide, I think, sufficient food for the imagination : just take the speed of eyesight and hearing, or ether waves bearing invisible messages, or atoms ever dancing, changing places and reuniting in some different form. The laws of the universe and the ministry of angels are not outgrown with childhood ; and foundations laid on theological virtues rest securely. When Betty grows up I look forward to seeing life with *her* eyes ; and perhaps, who knows ! we may see angels ascending and descending on the spot from which so many "Aves" have gone up like dew. That is our "latter rain." Don't laugh, please. Let us return to the fairies. Ruskin said : "None of us yet know, for none of us

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have been taught in early youth, what fairy palaces we may build of beautiful thought—proof against all adversity.” And I believe the art of thinking resembles the Japanese art of flower decoration,—you must study exactly what to leave out.

Betty's Daddy says he has learned a lot, these last three years. A child teaches one more than patience, if one is meek enough to accept its lessons. For instance, on their arrival all Armel's treasured and hard-earned books were subjected to my rigorous inquisition—and few were found to be really necessary as sustenance for the mind of a future Saint! “It makes me so glad I'm fated to walk in humbler paths, and admire afar off,” he remarked. (There are other book-cases in his den.) The shelves downstairs are adequately accounted for, I consider, with lives of Saints, mystical theology, poetry, natural history, and beautiful garden books. St. John of the Cross and Rûsbröck might seem too deep for a little child; but they will prove simple, I think, to her, who has had her mind prepared for them.

“*Why* do you like Saints better than fairies?” Betty was once asked by a practical lady, really anxious to know.

“Because they are *true*,” was the answer; and I believe it made a great impression.

An Irish Priest gives me to understand that in the Isle of Saints a divided allegiance is by no means impossible. That's as it may be. I'm for none of your divided allegiances in *this* Fairy-land. But Armel has not easily relinquished his tiny friends. He says that

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fairies were first thought of by a *man*, a poet: woman tells mother-stories, of domestic things; man, lying on his back in a wood, watching the leaves move up above him—between himself and the blue sky—felt so near in essence to the little fluttering things, that he imagined them peopled with dainty creatures, and told quaint stories about them to his child. The child, who had just come back from a woodland walk—it was the fifth of February, and the leaves of the young oaks still hung on, brown and many; and the sky shone between them, bright, clear blue; and the moss was springing green and very various, so that at nearly every step you had to shout out, “Mummy, I’ve found *another* kind of moss”—the child jumped at the fairies and henceforth hugged them to her heart. The mother, Armel tells me, sat down to darn stockings directly she came indoors, and naturally didn’t quite understand the game. Ah! . . . But the man was not Adam. Not for a long, long time did this poet come into the world. Primitive man feared the woods; and his mind ran on large, dreadful things—terrific animals that had to be fought and slain. It was later on, when he had conquered all the preliminary difficulties, that he began to think of smaller things—exquisite, beneficent, microscopic forms of imagined life.

However, of all the beloved inhabitants of his own dear Fairy-land Armel, most generously, now retains but one—a young faun, a lovely creature, who knows him, loves him, and runs down to him from its home up in “the Nest.” I see him gazing after it sometimes in the Spring, with a wistful longing in his eyes. . . .

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Dear Mother, it is not easily that I have commanded myself to live in a world where there are no irresponsible little people, and I must tell you just in a whisper, I should dearly like to play with that faun too! Perhaps it was almost ungracious of me to refuse to do so. Having found, or at least having been found, at last, by the Prince Charming of my own life's fairy-tale, it may seem rather strange that I should complain of the conventional love scene and the "happy ever after" ending to the story. Yet I do think that such a *finale* is apt to raise false expectations in a young girl's mind. And I think the accounts of vast stores of gold, and quantities of jewellery, upon which so much stress is laid, turns the mind aside from that straight path which leads to true gold and real jewels.

Saints dealt with the question of money more simply : when it is necessary it will come. You remember how one found in his bed the pound of which he stood badly in need ; whilst another discovered coins under a stone. Sometimes a beautiful young man left the exact sum wanted at the Convent door. In every case the moral is the same : when money is required—rightly required—it comes. People may not believe it. That is their misfortune. Children will believe anything if you begin to tell it to them young enough. Tell them the stories *you* love, and they quickly catch the infection. Stories of Saints are more entrancing than any fairy-tale, and also true, the *real* truth—far truer than most materialistic, twentieth-century folk are able to conceive. And as for jewellery, it is silly for little girls to wear rings, and



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bracelets, and locket ; don't you think so ? There are Heavenly Princesses, called "Poor Clares," who have given up everything they once had, saying, "Let us wear poor garments for the sake of the Little Lord Jesus Who lay in a manger." St. Lawrence's "Jewels" were the poor. And everyone who has studied oysters knows that a true pearl is simply a victory over irritation.

"When the fire has consumed all selfish love, all selfish fear of losing or not gaining—love is perfect, and the golden ring of our espousals is wider than Heaven and Earth," wrote Rüsbröck.

"You carry a great sum of gold about with you, take care not to meet any highwayman," said St. Jerome to the Holy Virgin Eustochia. These are the stories I tell to Betty. One day a little friend showed us her jewel-box and asked where Betty kept her jewellery. "She doesn't keep it, she finds it," rather surprised her ; so I added, "Would you like to see how her gems are set ? There may not be any sitting at this moment, but I can show you where some of them sat an hour ago." Rain-drops running down the telegraph lines are our strings of pearls, and we keep our diamonds in the Irish yews on the terrace, after a storm.

We have a care concerning but one thing—how we live in our thought world. To remain always young, and carry the buoyancy of early life into maturer years, one must cultivate a happy mind, and be ready at a moment's notice to enjoy anything.

When Betty is, at length, allowed to read Hans

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Andersen's "Fairy Tales and Stories" she will recognize many of her former fancies, "veils falling from the Queen's eyes" and "little atoms dancing with a perfect rhythm," besides deep, mystic interpretations of the outer world, to which her young mind has been thoroughly accustomed.

And really no one who sees her in our garden could say that she has ever been deprived of Fairy-land! I love each Summer to photograph her amongst the flowers, and sometimes for a suitable background we arrange especially beautiful effects.

One of these, a bank thrown up against a hedge last Spring, sixteen yards long and one yard high, set with large clumps of yellow toadflax about four feet apart, with big blue periwinkles falling down between, is just now yielding wonderful results, and makes me wonder why toadflax is not more often grown in gardens. Is it because it needs wide spaces to show it off in all its beauty, or is it because the gardener looks upon *Linaria vulgaris* as a weed? Yet even a weed that freely offers blossom all through the Summer and late Autumn is worthy of consideration, and deserves to have some place assigned it where it may flourish to its heart's content; and if it cannot be allowed to grow beside the old red bergamot in the herbaceous border, set apart in the wild garden it will shine out like lighted candles against the darkness of the hedge behind. Seen from a distance, when growing on a height, what with its spiked leaves and pointed spurs, there is no plant quite so suggestive of delicate architectural spires. In combination with

## THE REAL FAIRY-LAND

blue lobelia and red geranium it is far more effective than the conventional calceolaria, and if it is found to spread too rapidly, well ! surely it can always be pulled up and given away or burned. Anyhow, its introduction to the garden is an experiment worth trying. The beautiful foliage provides a pleasing background to other flowers earlier in the year ; and then, when it has already done more than many a more notable plant to help the year along, it offers profusely two or three months of unusual and attractive colour. There is no other wild flower which can exactly be compared to this erect herbaceous plant, with its numerous grass-like leaves of glaucous hue and its dense clusters of pale yellow and deep orange blossom. The flowers resemble those of the antirrhinum, except that the corolla is spurred at the base, and that in the matter of "opening and shutting its mouth" the snapdragon has the advantage. In fact, the only serious objection that has ever been raised to this lovely and neglected plant was that of a gardener's little girl, aged four, who derived much amusement from pinching the snapdragon flowers between her finger and thumb and watching the palate open, as if in imitation of the fabulous monster from which it derives its name. "Don't you like toadflax?" asked a lady who found the child ruthlessly "weeding" them away from the roadside. "No, I don't," was the unhesitating reply. "They won't open and shut their mouths properly."

Don't you delight in a child's fresh outlook? Once when I gave Betty a cake of violet-scented soap, instead of being pleased, she said : "I think it would have been

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much kinder to leave the scent in the dear little violets." Ever since she called T "a good I" and F "a bad E," she has had original ideas. On one occasion when I was explaining that she must make the sign of the cross to drive her temptation away, she said, "But I thought you told me always to be kind to everything, and it isn't very kind to the poor little temptation to frighten it away."

People are sometimes afraid that without fairies a child will grow up without imagination. Trust me for that. Once Betty said to Uncle Llewelyn, "I've got a toothache. At least I know I haven't really; but it feels as if I had."

And he laughed and turned to me saying, "You *have* taught her well!"

Mother, dear, when you *do* come some day to this light-hearted spot of jokes and Saints and flowers (which you created by one stroke of your magic pen, out of what might otherwise have been a life's sad chaos), when you *do* visit us you will find yourself welcomed as the beloved Fairy Godmother.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE  
HILL





### XIII

#### THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL

**B**ETWEEN my childhood and my present home there stands a hill, the highest hill in Herefordshire: a lilac-bower, a brook-garden, a waterfall, an Earthly Paradise, lie on the other side. How often I used to ride up there alone, thinking of my Kindred Soul! and as I gazed out over the beautiful wide valley I used to try to read into the future. I looked right down on Mary's Meadow—it was all written plainly before me, but I could not see it then. Trains passed, leaving a decorative line of smoke across the landscape, but I never guessed what graces and blessings they were bringing into my married life. . . .

How often my sister and I talked of the future, as girls will, whilst our fat, grass-fed pony crawled up the two and a half miles steep incline through Ludlow Wood! At the summit of Sunny Bank we used to pull up for a moment, to look down and far away, over the dark fir trees, to the Welsh Mountains which formed the background of our Mother's childhood. From that point one may look forward or look back, there are lovely things for the eye to rest on either way. And nowadays, when I go there, I see how easily, with faith,

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mountains are removed. I had a dear friend once who used to say when troubles came, "There may be something lovely round the corner," cheering herself over many a weary day with that little saying. "There will be something lovely on the other side of the hill," was my remedy. Every climbing soul must long to see what lies on the other side of the hill, what exquisite, mysterious happiness awaits one in that undiscovered country. I used to think I must *climb* to get over the hill, that the steep ascent to Heaven would have to be mounted with labour and difficulty: now I know that it is only one's own foolish clinging to material possessions which creates the impression of there being a hill at all. The poor in spirit see through all that!

Looking forward one should make a rule to think of all the best things one can possibly imagine, and to trust God that the future will be either exactly that or something still better. No probabilities or facts or hard statistics must be allowed to dim that vision. And looking back, if one has climbed even a few rungs of the ladder of life, one will see over the mountains, which no longer appear to be mountains at all, having taken their proper place amongst the creatures of the plain.

The past, when properly looked back upon, simply shouts with joy. Browning is my poet! and I should say this if I only knew one line of the Abt Vogler: "For evil just one good more." There you have happy, wise, triumphant philosophy!

"One good more," he always whispers when I get to the top of Sunny Bank. He stands there waiting for



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me. I may forget him at other times, but he never forgets that I shall need him when I return to the wonderland of the eighties. . . . "One good more!"

It marks the mile-stones to look bravely back into the past, and take some sorrow or some fault out into the light of day—the present day—and examine it again.

"Tidying my mind," I call it. And Our Lady helps me. Before I became a Catholic my mind used to be in such a muddle. Every night for years I have asked her to come and sort out my ideas and put them in proper order. Sometimes it is a garden border, and the dandelions, and plantains, and sow-thistles have to be weeded out, and the treasured flowers left free to bloom again. Sometimes it is a nest of drawers filled with accumulations of MSS., notes for stories, half-written articles, old letters which might come in useful—this must go here, that must go there, these are of no use and can now be destroyed. A burn-heap usually comes about the end of this imagining, and with a prayer from the "Jesus-Psalter," "Send me here my purgatory," I fall asleep.

You asked me years ago to tell you about my meditations. But I did not do so because I felt rather shy lest they might seem too unusual and unorthodox. However, since you continue to ask for them, I will try, though I hope you will not be as taken aback as my Novice-Mistress when in the first year of my Catholic life she asked the same question, and I told her I meditated chiefly on silkworms. Frankly, that still commends itself to my mind as a really illuminating subject for a

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Nineteenth Century would-be nun: you know how the little creature winds itself up tighter and tighter, and tighter and tighter, until it is entirely cut off from life as it used to know it; and then suddenly, when the psychological moment arrives, it discovers that its wings have grown, and it can fly out of what seemed a hopeless tangle, into a beautiful, glorious, far-wider world.

Well, at Benediction this evening I meditated on "The Owl and the Pussy Cat." Of course you know Lear's verses in the Nonsense-book, and, I expect, in some nursery you must have heard them sung. I thought about them all through the Litany of Loretto, or rather the thought of them was with me all that time, and I used the distraction as material for meditation, thereby defeating the tempter. After the service I knelt for a few minutes arranging all the memories connected with it tidily in my mind:—

There was a certain artist, once upon a time, called "Fanny," from his success, I believe, in taking ladies' parts in amateur theatricals. His large, ambitious, unfinished pictures formed an untidy dado round his studio, his broad smile welcomed every intruder at every unreasonable hour—really *encouraging* interruptions—and his place of abode was the most popular spot in all that great Art Colony.

Now there was a certain young lady who took him and his work *au grand sérieux*, examining canvas after canvas with much disapproval and many suggestions. It *may* have been myself, though I sincerely hope not, and I

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL

hardly think it—she was not a bit like me, and they called her “the superior Miss B.-W.”

“Why don’t you send this to the Academy?” she used to ask severely, turning round some large half-finished picture which struck her as being the embodiment of a grand idea.

“They won’t take it. I did try, but Sir Frederick Leighton says there is too much white,” Fanny would reply cheerfully, pointing to the uncovered spaces. His ideas were beautiful: one in particular, I remember, a study of kneeling figures at the altar-rail, in which the faces—side by side—of a poor old beggar man and a fashionably-dressed young girl suggested the common need of all ages and all classes for spiritual nourishment.

He sang in the choir, and the idea for the picture had come to him one morning during a choral celebration, he said, but somehow he could not carry it out.

In the entrance to Fanny’s soul there may have been weeds, or there may not—now I believe not—at the time “the superior Miss B.-W.” felt sure that there were: frivolities, sloths, carelessnesses, and an easy good nature, which to an intense, earnest, climbing soul seemed extraordinarily reprehensible in a young man of no means and undoubted talent.

Even when he *did* hit on a really good theme he was too slack to work on it and carry the idea through: that was the judgment of two eyes filled with beams. In his large blue, transparently honest and faithful eyes there could only have been a tiny mote, if indeed there

## MARY'S MEADOW PAPERS

was any hindrance to true vision, and it was the very glory of his vision of the At-one-ment which prevented him from painting his picture—or at least from hurrying over the painting of it.

So he sang in the choir, having a tremendous voice and a real love of music ; although “ A Tavern in the Town ” beneath one’s window at eleven o’clock at night, or “ The Owl and the Pussy Cat went to Sea,” with a guitar accompaniment, after one of his successful coffee-parties, were what one generally associated with Fanny’s voice.

These seemed to be the limit of his musical vocabulary, though to amuse his guests he was ready to imitate anything : he could bark like a dog, bleat like a sheep, and crow like a cock. Quoting Plato, Miss B.-W. felt bound to inform him that “ there was no place for such as he in our state—the law will not allow them.” What did Fanny care for her laws ! His law was the law of Love. And if his repertoire was small, it was sufficient for the entertainment of his friends, and for the comforting of the afflicted.

Every new student was asked on arriving in the village : “ Have you heard Fanny sing ‘ The Owl and the Pussy Cat ? ’ ”

It was not *his* choice—it was his very popularity that kept him down at that level ; but the superior Miss B.-W. looking on contemptuously, judged him a trifler—a *dilettante*.

What he *could* be ! that was what she felt. She could have *loved* the Fanny that she felt he might have been.

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL

As it was, their conversations were confined to questions and irritability on her side, and genial, off-hand, good-natured answers on his.

His opinion on newcomers was what she specially sought, and what she never could obtain. He refused to criticize or judge, although he had such exceptional opportunities.

Newcomers were taken to his studio, as a matter of course. He always got to know them at once—or they got to know him—I am not quite sure which way it was; and the superior person being inclined to pick and choose, and select, looked to Fanny to keep her informed as to which new arrivals were suitable candidates for “our set.”

Now Fanny recognized no set, and utterly declined to discriminate. Pointed noses held in the air were the only kind of noses he didn't like, he said; and as for manners, the only manners he couldn't stand were “the manners of your good old county families!”

“What do you think of the new man who is working in Mr. S——'s class?” Miss B.-W. would ask.

“Oh! he's all right,” Fanny would reply.

“And the two girls who have to come to coach with Miss H——? Have you met them yet? Are they nice? Do you think I should like them? Shall I call upon them?”

“Oh! they are all right.”

“And Jimmy D—— has come back again, I hear. He used to be in the school with you, wasn't he, long ago? Someone told me he was fearfully rowdy, and

## MARY'S MEADOW PAPERS

got into trouble and was sent away. Was it drink? and has he sobered down at all?"

"Oh! he's all right."

"And they've got a new clerk in the office, I see. Do you think he'll be more satisfactory than the old one? and keep things more up to the mark?"

"Yes, he's all right."

"O Fanny!" Miss B.-W. would at length exclaim. "You make me so angry! You never take the trouble to think. *Everyone* isn't all right! *Everything* can't be all right! I long to shake you."

"You can if you like." The young giant would smile, with imperturbable good humour. And he waited with a look in his eyes which she could never understand.

"What are you thinking about?" she would demand impatiently.

"Do you ever read Browning?" he asked one day. It sounded utterly inconsequent—and she turned away, more irritated than ever.

But in after years, when she began to study Browning, she remembered Fanny's smile. Of course what he meant was: "God's in His Heaven—all's right with the world."

By that time all superiority had been knocked out of Miss B.-W. Once, in a dream, she found herself at Heaven's Gate—after panting up the hill—and lo and behold Fanny was there! with his guitar, and his eternal smile.

"How on earth did *you* get here?" she asked in great

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL

surprise. "You never seemed to me to be taking any trouble to climb the hill!"

"You ought to have known," said St. Peter, very severely, "that he was here all the time."

My Director once told me that "everyone should feel rested and supernaturalized by contact with God, through me."

After spending an evening with Fanny his friends went home feeling very much like that.

The art students and the Priest might have expressed it differently, but what my Director meant was exactly what the too-often-poor-hard-working-struggling-ambitious-disappointed students felt after being with Fanny. He never looked for faults, he never disapproved. He was always doing some kindness for somebody, only he did it so easily, so merrily, that not till many, many years afterwards did anybody even guess that he was doing kindnesses at all.

When I came to study, on Betty's account, the qualities necessary for canonization, I discovered that heroic virtue is the virtue which from long habit can be performed sweetly and easily,—and my thoughts at once flew back to that smiling Saint, chanting his office in his studio long ago. The three degrees of attention which may be given to it also seemed rather applicable to him; he certainly pronounced the words correctly; and though no one ever thought much about the meaning of the song, his listeners felt that their hearts were lightened, and their minds were lifted up by that rich, happy voice, and that kind smile, and that simple,

## MARY'S MEADOW PAPERS

merry tune. What must it not have meant, I now think, to those shy, anxious, clever strangers, eager to pass into the great school, having just sent up their work for the Master's inspection! or for his fellow-artists, later on, when all their future prospects seemed to depend on the result of the competitive examination, in which they hoped to pass on from the Preliminary to the Professor's Life Class! or to those growing boys, troubled by the price of rose-madder, and the expenses of new canvases and brushes; struggling with poverty and hunger—no dinner and another stretcher, kind of thing! And later on, when there came the difficulty of finding frames for exhibition, or when they awaited the decision of the Royal Academy—all these, who laboured and were heavy burdened, passed through the door of Fanny's studio, and amidst the general litter and apparent idleness and carelessness of the man who was "too lazy to be anything but good-natured," as the Superior Person then thought, each of his visitors learned how to pass out again—well after midnight—with a light heart, a mind set at rest, and "The Owl and the Pussy Cat" ringing in his ears.

"Why sing about an owl?" Miss B.-W. used to ask.

"Why play with a dove?" his critics asked St. John the Evangelist, and I believe he answered: "Because our human nature requires a certain amount of innocent recreation."

No wonder that Fanny's visitors all came again, and brought their friends with them, and wanted everybody else to hear him sing it too! It set them at their



## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL

ease; and no matter how he suggested varying his entertainment with ventriloquism, at which he was really rather clever, and dumb-crambo and conjuring tricks, they one and all refused to depart until they had heard from their host's own lips the legend of how his *protégés* danced, hand in hand, on the edge of the sand, to the light of that beautiful moon. Then they left, on really good terms with themselves.

I think that if Fanny ever erred, it was on the side of kindness. Perhaps there came a moment when he had quickly to decide between justice and mercy, and he—whose aim for years had been to make everyone with whom he came in contact as happy as possible—chose mercy. He will, I doubt not, be rewarded for his choice in Heaven. But we never saw him again. The petty conventionalities of social life separated his circumstances from ours, and "our set" was the loser. Only once, when something had gone wrong, and I was driving through London with my heart weighed down and my mind ajar, his woof of universal sympathy crossed, for an instant, the warp of my petty sorrow. There, at the corner of Piccadilly, stood Fanny, waving and smiling! Just that once—reminding me that somewhere in the world of God's creation a great heart and a broad smile still live on.

"Took the wrong turning. Made a bad marriage. Dropped away altogether," are so glibly said, and such phrases may too easily be made to cover the infidelity of quasi-friends. But should these papers ever meet his eye, which is most unlikely, I trust he will forgive me for

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having cherished, for nearly a quarter of a century, so affectionate a memory. If a man does not want to be remembered he should not have so kind a heart ! And should you, dear Mother, in the course of your wide excursions into the Land of Friendship ever encounter my Fanny, tell him from me that it is his critic of the olden days who is his greatest admirer now. And since imitation is the sincerest flattery, then my present aims in life are to him a tribute most sincere.

From the vantage ground of Mary's Meadow, on the other side of the hill, I see that Fanny's way of living was the best expression of the only real religion.

\* \* \* \* \*

A sudden light revealed my great mistake. All my life I had been under the impression that I had something to *teach*—something to *give*. What it was exactly I did not know, but I believed that if I climbed and climbed I should find it. I thought I had a message for the world, whilst, in reality, the world had a message for me. It was around me, within me, about me ; everyone else had it, everyone else knew it—it was for me to *receive*, not to give ; to *learn*, not teach. Fanny, Browning, Juliana, St. Augustine, the trees, the flowers, the stars, the sky, all brought the same answer ; the voice of all creation had been shouting at me all my life, and now at last I understood.

“When I saw that God doeth all that is done, I saw no sin ; and then I saw that all *is* well.” As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, World without end. Amen.

# MY MILLENNIUM



1862-1863

#### XIV

#### MY MILLENNIUM

PLEASE believe in my Millennium. Like everything else, it is half really there, and the other half lies in your capacity for perceiving it. You know how when your mind is filled with kind and beautiful thoughts you see beauty all around you—a loveliness of which other people dream. If they only *did* dream of it they *would* see it. St. Augustine says : “ You must understand to believe ; then believe to understand.” So *do* believe it. *Please.*

Of course I know that many people, beholding the world in its present state, feel perfectly certain that the Millennium has not yet arrived, and they cannot conceive how I can think it has ! Well, really, truly, I believe that one should live *as if it were*, and then it will be. One has to remind oneself continually “ though everything appears all wrong, it really is all right : *my senses are ajar.*” Apropos of which you remember when a door is not a door ? and how do you like this riddle : When is my Millennium not a Millennium ? Answer : When I’m ajar ! But seriously, isn’t your world very much the outcome of your own mind ? If you don’t

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think of hideous, horrible things they don't exist *for you*. And isn't a mother who admits into her child's thought-world anything not beautiful, and nice, and good, as bad as Eve, creating misery?

Some time ago I asked to be Queen of the World for seven years, promising that if you would give me all the Infant Schools, I would give you the Millennium; but my modest little international request met with no response on the part of those answerable for the bringing-up of the world's youth! What I really meant was this: if little children were given only lovely, kindly, happy, healthy thoughts, much of the ugliness, illness and suffering of the present day would disappear. In one generation you wouldn't recognize the human race, and in three we should all be living in Paradise again.

Yet even if we have been brought up all wrong, and if to us the conditions of the world do *not* appear ideal, and if some individuals do *not* seem to be altogether good, and kind and honest, I am convinced that we must try to live as if they were. It rests with each one of us, by an act of will, to create the sort of thought-world to which we may accommodate our action. Matter is the expression of spirit, and those who would study the art of living must imitate Velasquez and Frans Hals in "single-touch," first the definite intention, and then the definite act. I feel certain that it is in this way we shall restore the perfect rhythm to the world; for that peaceful dominion which was enjoyed by our first parents through original justice, can, at least, partially be acquired by us.

## MY MILLENNIUM

Our Lord's teaching about our being *all one* is, I believe, much simpler than people usually imagine. He could have conquered the world with the scientific knowledge He possessed; but what good would that have been? Paradise could not be brought back by *force*; mankind must rise to it; and so Christ taught us how to be Blessed—*i.e.*, happy.

Love, love, love, and never mind a little suffering. He has taken nearly all the pain, and you have only to bear just a tiny bit to help the world along. When suffering comes you must believe that God wishes to lead you farther and farther into Himself, and if you yield yourself up to Him with all your troubles, you will find Heaven on Earth, since Heaven is God, and God is in your soul. At first you journey as "a secret friend," ascending rapidly, lovingly, with measured step; then, Rüsbröck says, you go on as a mystical child, to die farther up, in the simplicity which is ignorant of itself.

We are all conscious on a glorious summer day of that feeling of sweetness, which simply makes one's heart ache with vague longing; but we don't all know that what we want is already ours—ours in the depth of our own hearts.

I wish that there were more people like you who readily believe that the secret of a happier, better life lies quite near to hand, and that the clue to it may easily be found. On the whole, the scarcity of happiness is so obvious that everyone agrees it would be well worth while to tap a new source, if it could be found. "It is a

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great help to have a kind person saying 'hot and cold' when you play hide-and-seek," Betty tells me; and in the same way with the search for happiness, it is a great help to have kind people encouraging you with praise and sympathy; the irritating action of the brain is immediately set at rest; and later on, when the world has been thankfully accepted as it is, you experience a most delightful sense of relief from strain.

You must not say this is too good to be true. You will find the idea of My Millennium in all the poets; I don't for a moment pretend that my views are original. For instance, take Wordsworth's "Porch," Hood's "Lady's Dream," Father Faber's "World," or Robert Buchanan's "Happy Hearts of Earth," and you will see why I have striven "to make my narrow, homely world a glass, where shapes and shadows, like a breath, might pass, dimly reflecting motions out of Heaven."

This is how, off and on all through the day, I polish up my mirror. I believe that God is with me. I shut my eyes and draw deep breaths until I am conscious of His nearness and His tenderness, and then I ask Him to act in me—that everyone may feel rested and supernaturalized by contact with God through me. When I am unable to do anything else I sit and think of people *at their best*, or as I would wish them to be; sending out invisible messages of peace, vibrating with love for the world. When there is something to be done, I ask my Master, my King, my Friend, "What would You wish me to do now?" and then I know, and act, as the Handmaid of the Lord, still sweetly, tenderly, enfolded in the



## MY MILLENNIUM

Divine Heart, believing everything outside myself to be within the Ocean of God's Love.

What people love in Mary's Meadow, although they don't know it, is *the over soul*—something that never was on sea or land. You know it is said to be the merit and preservation of friendship that it takes place on a level higher than the actual characters of the parties would seem to warrant. And such a friendship may be extended, I trust, in course of time, to all those who have not yet got so far along "the Path of Mary."

Lately the sad case of a man, homeless and ill, who was refused admittance to the casual ward of a work-house after six o'clock, and his subsequent arrest by a kind-hearted policeman, has led to much thought on the part of those who wish to alleviate the sufferings of the poor, and I only wish that all well-disposed persons of means and leisure could be brought into touch with one another, and their independent efforts organized into one united plan. Valuable contributions towards the great ideal of universal brotherhood might be offered by those in whose minds the possibility of comforting the comfortless has taken definite form. In a work of this nature one may rely a good deal upon the results of parallel development.

Personally, my dream of a home for the homeless, a friend for the friendless, is this: that near each town there should be at least one cottage where poor wanderers were certain of a welcome, a cottage called "Traveller's Joy," with a large comfortable porch, and a door opened by a woman with infinite patience and a mother's heart.

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Everyone who came would be received with equal courtesy and kindness, and each case sympathetically dealt with ; whilst one might need the price of a night's lodging, another would earn his money by first working in the garden, and a third might be invited back to breakfast after performing his allotted task in the casual ward.

Of course I am aware of all the objections to beggars and tramps. "They tell lies. They throw away the bread you give them. However much you try to please them, they are never grateful." That is the conventional way in which Dives salves his conscience when he sits down to a good dinner, having just refused a penny to poor Lazarus at his gate. Many years lived on the lines of Faith, Hope, and Charity have convinced me that if one does not expect that kind of thing one will never find it. On the other hand, I do not think one should expect too much. It is no use to look immediately for visible improvement ; one must be content to know that one is helping to lay the foundation of a happier state of things.

A man who has spent many years working amongst young men and boys in the most easterly part of the East End was asked what he did when some poor fellow in whom he took an interest relapsed and went again to prison.

"On the day he is set free," he said, "I wait for him outside, and give him another chance." That seems to be the only spirit in which any permanent good can be effected. And one may either do it for Christ's sake,

## MY MILLENNIUM

remembering those awkward questions which He is going to ask us at the Judgment Day; or one may work upon a scientific basis, understanding that any improvement which is to be eventually arrived at must first be built up in one's own thought-world.

"Of course, if you say so, I believe it," seems the best principle on which to receive all confidences; one need have no fear of being taken in; there is no deliberate intention to deceive; though it may be as well to recognize the fact that a man who sleeps in a tree, and boils his tin can over a fire of sticks at three o'clock in the morning, is apt to see the happenings of the day from his own point of view, and to colour them rather according to his own fancy.

"It is my own fault. I got into trouble through drink," is just as frequent an explanation of the wandering life as "an operation in the hospital," or "an accident on the railway." Swollen feet, wounded hands, failing eyesight, may also account for much misery, besides being the cause of destitution.

And they do not want very much—these men and women of the endless road—just to feel *cared for*: a little food, a pair of socks, a few soft rags, boracic ointment, a piece of flannel for the chest. Perhaps one may be asked to write a letter to a son or daughter who is feeling anxious as to the old people's whereabouts, and then one is lost in admiration at the way in which hardships and sufferings are to be minimized for fear of causing the relations pain.

A man just out of hospital, after his first experience

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of the casual ward—the one blanket, the heap of stones, the slice of bread, the drink of water—may be expected to arrive at the “Traveller’s Joy” sick at heart, numb with the cold, and wishing for nothing but to die. That he should leave it, after a warm meal and a few kind words, with a lighter step is our business, and I take it a business which everyone might do well to attend to. Those who believe in the recuperative power of sympathy are not surprised when a fortnight later the same man will return to say he has got a job, he feels much better, and somehow that cup of cocoa by the fire put a new heart into him. For is not love the greatest thing in the world? And was not life rightly estimated by Browning as: “Just our chance o’ the prize of learning love—how love might be, hath been indeed, and is.”

I don’t know much, even about my own beloved Millennium, though sometimes just for a moment I almost seem to understand. The only thing I am always quite, quite sure of is that *one cannot be too kind*.

The Kingdom of Christ, I believe, will soon be established upon earth, and for the realization of that Kingdom I labour and wait. These papers have shown you how. And from them you will see what an immense satisfaction is to be derived from devoting oneself to a cause entirely believed in. However, Mother of my Beloved, you are right in saying, “It is not given to all to bear so clear a testimony to the sweetness of their fate.”

# THE IDEA OF MARY'S MEADOW

By Mrs. ARMEL O'CONNOR

## SOME PRESS OPINIONS

Many devout readers are already familiar with the Ludlow Sanctuary for the cultivation in domestic life of Franciscan virtues . . . the little home where the ideals of an unworthy life are to be realized, and where Betty, the adopted daughter, is to be trained to be a saint. —*Times*.

A deep spirituality, always inspiring and often exquisite, lends beauty and dignity to the whole record of this making of a happy home. The story follows the process of selection and of construction, deals outwardly with the fabric and inwardly with the animating intention, and altogether reveals a perfect system of life, at one with itself, and moving consistently to a definite goal. If it gets its deserts it will find a considerable public. —*Daily Telegraph*.

Every one should gain something by the perusal of these pages. —*Literary World*.

It is rare to find a writer who can smile, without cynicism, at her critics, her admirers, at herself and her deepest spiritual possessions. Yet they have often said you do not properly believe your own religion till you can laugh at your expression of it. And we like to think that, with the "Flemish Mystic," whom Mr. Armel O'Connor quotes in his preface, "we can understand!" —*British Review*.

Coventry Patmore, the poet of etherealized married love, would have delighted in "The Idea of Mary's Meadow," a prose idyll composed by a wife for a husband. . . . The matter of the book, the establishment of a little dwelling-place for mother and adopted daughter, might be thought trivial, like the canvas backing of a piece of tapestry, but it is so elaborated by literary skill and high spiritual insight that the result is in every way beautiful. —*Month*.

It is a great idea—this of "Mary's Meadow," anyway, and a great career for a child it is to be a saint. . . . A word of praise is due to the printing and binding of this original book. —*Universe*.

A high idea and a high ideal. . . . The happy blending of earthly and Heavenly love. —*The Tablet*.

Parents and teachers will be helped by this book. —*America*.

Mary's Meadow lies in a region of thought and aspiration far above and beyond common place criticism. It is only possible to say a hearty and appreciative "Thank you" . . . The world is the better, sweeter and saner, and will, we hope, become holier, for the appearance of this modest little book. May many more such sweet offerings be sent out into it from Mary's Meadow. —*Downside Review*.

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# SWEET-SCENTED LEAVES

And other Stories of Conduct and Character

By Mrs. ARMEL O'CONNOR

(VIOLET BULLOCK-WEBSTER)

## SOME PRESS OPINIONS

Well written tales.—*The Times*.

As fragrant and tender a *pot-pourri* as was ever gathered in the covers of a book.—*The Athenæum*.

Character-drawing rather than novelty of plot construction is the author's strong point, together with a rich allusory style, which stands for much assimilated reading.—*The Ave Maria*.

To have been the inspiration of such loving acts of fraternal charity should be reward enough, but our author merits also the praise of a lesser charm—literary grace, and her sure touch of familiarity with the invisible world.—*The Catholic World*.

The author loves and understands the poor and suffering.—*America*.

Mrs. O'Connor possesses the rare art of making piety attractive.—*The Magnificat*.

Well known among a class of readers who can appreciate the fluency and charm of her quiet and finished composition. . . . A Charlotte Brontë could not be more faithful to an ideal than Violet Bullock-Webster.—*The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*.

MARY'S MEADOW . LUDLOW

# THE RIGHT NOTE

By Mrs. ARMEL O'CONNOR

## SOME PRESS OPINIONS

Ten stories . . . which combine the cult of Franciscan saintliness with some humour and literary taste. — *The Times*.

Ten charming stories.—*The Universe*.

The quiet distinction that comes always from one devout to the Mother of God is evident in these pages.—*The Rosary*.

# THOUGHTS FOR BETTY FROM THE HOLY LAND

By Mrs. ARMEL O'CONNOR

## SOME PRESS OPINIONS

A little book . . . which has gone all over the world.—*The Daily Mail*.

Her books remind us of Elizabeth . . . the chatelaine of the German Garden. There is in them a like infusion of crisp whimsicality, of fearlessness, of passionate love for Nature (just a little "educated" by wise art), which lift them wholly from the commonplace.—*The British Review*.

Betty's "Mother" has the exceptional gift of treating spiritual things with delicate humour.—*America*.

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# BETTY'S BOOK

## SOME PRESS OPINIONS

Mary's Meadow, Ludlow, from which already a gentle influence has been wafted into Catholic letters, sends forth a unique brochure entitled "About the Blessed Sacrament"; it is "For Little Children," "by a Child." An introduction is contributed by C. C. Martindale, S. J. "Betty," eight years old, has, we are told, contributed both the text and the illustrations. These latter are the distinctive feature of this very charming little book. Only the outlines of the figures are given; the colouring is left to the child reader with his or her box of coloured crayons. What a delightful plan of co-operative book-making! To "Betty," eight years old, should go the honours of a pioneer; to her will come, we believe, many blessings besides. This unique *opus* is not for sale, but may be had by applying to Mary's Meadow, Ludlow, England, "as long as any copies are left."—*Ave Maria*.

Here we have a child's thoughts, and beautiful thoughts they are. Like everything from "The Meadow," it is fresh and healthy.—*Stella Maris*.

In his introduction to this pamphlet Father Martindale, S. J., describes how the idea occurred to its little authoress through her sympathy for children too young to go to Holy Communion.—*The Lamp*.

In both conception and execution the booklet is charming and unique.—*Child of Mary Magazine*.

Could anything be more fitting than a book on this greatest of mysteries from the lily hand and heart of a child?—*America*.

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# POEMS

By ARMEL  
O'CONNOR

## SOME PRESS OPINIONS

Let us step aside a little out of the turmoil. Even in the Renaissance all was not strenuous, and the byways produced little flowers which match the roses of the Borgia for lastingness. Those who remember Mary's Meadow by Ludlow Town, and Betty and her Mother, will hasten to procure the poems of Betty's Father.—*Church Times*.

It is pleasant in these days to have a poet publish his own verse ; for that is the complete poetic way. Moreover this is verse very well worth publishing, being sincere in its note and sweetly melodious in its form.—*Book Monthly*.

Verses of great refinement and tenderness.—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

These poems are notable for the music of their rhythm and the grace of their phrasing . . . their spirit is an unquestioning and quick receptivity to what is beautiful and divine in nature.—*Times*.

Mr. O'Connor is a Christian mystic ; but his mysticism is of the order of Traherne's and no sterner man's . . . the reader is delighted to find in poem after poem proof that Mr. O'Connor has the power of sensuous enjoyment without which no spiritual beauty was ever apprehended and no fine poetry ever written. . . . To him the world of sense, rightly approached, is the very porch of that *locus refrigerii*, *locus et pacis* which is the mystic's home ; and his poetry reveals the choice and ordered gaiety of spirit which is the mystic's privilege. . . . His higher flights in mysticism are nearly always successful. In "The Gift" he shows the rare faculty of writing lightly and gaily about the profound mysteries ; and "Because of Her" soars securely where many a good lover has grown dizzy . . . his is a choice mind that makes choice poetry.—*Times Literary Supplement*.

More nervous (*énervé*, I mean) than Mrs. Meynell, he has much of her peculiar craftsmanship and even method. Far less flamboyant, less opulent, less scalding-teared, less ensanguined, than Francis Thompson, much, none the less, of the world-outlook of that thorn-crowned laureate is his. And he has a sense of humour. . . .—*Month*.

MARY'S MEADOW · LUDLOW

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